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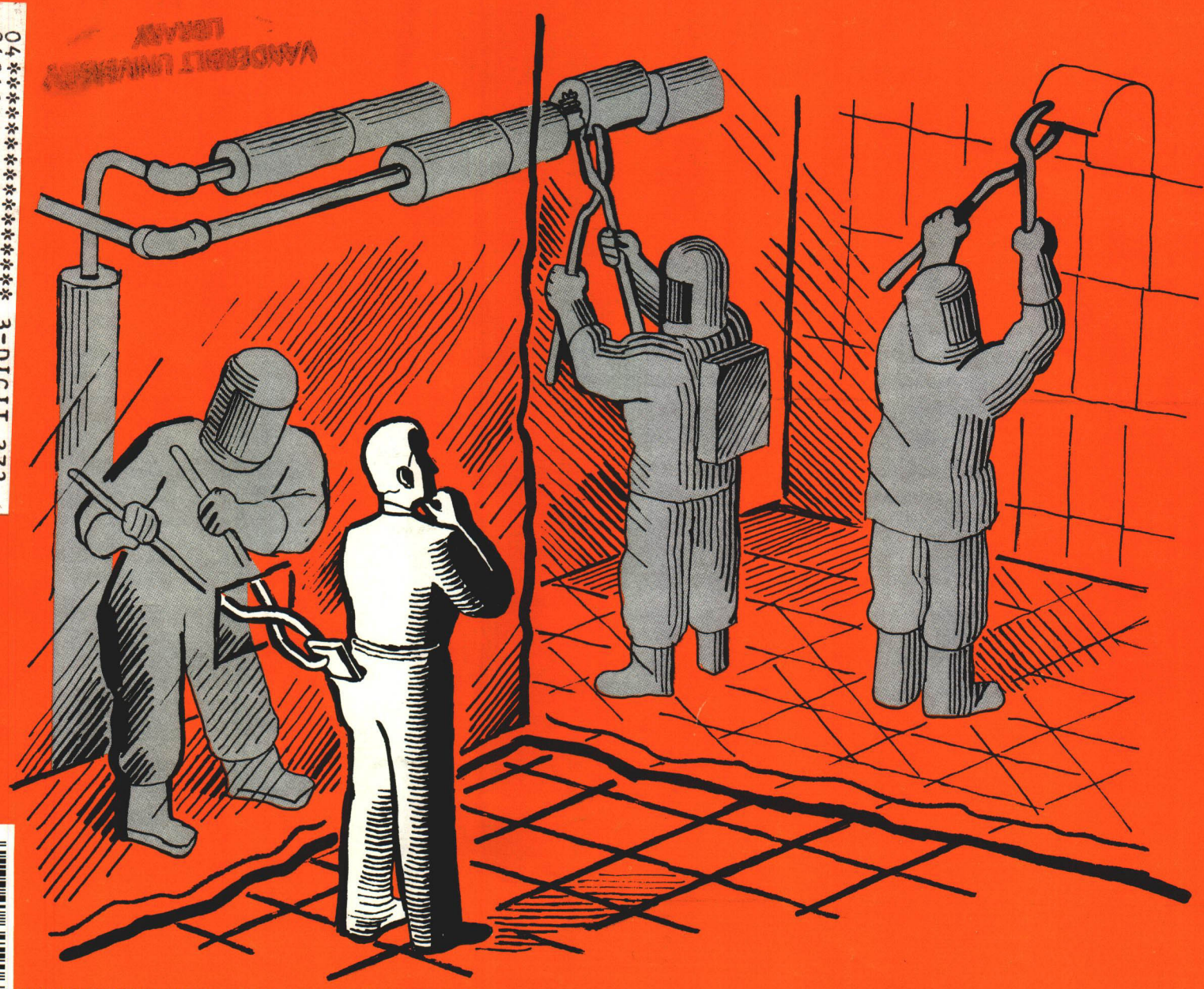
by Michael Fumento



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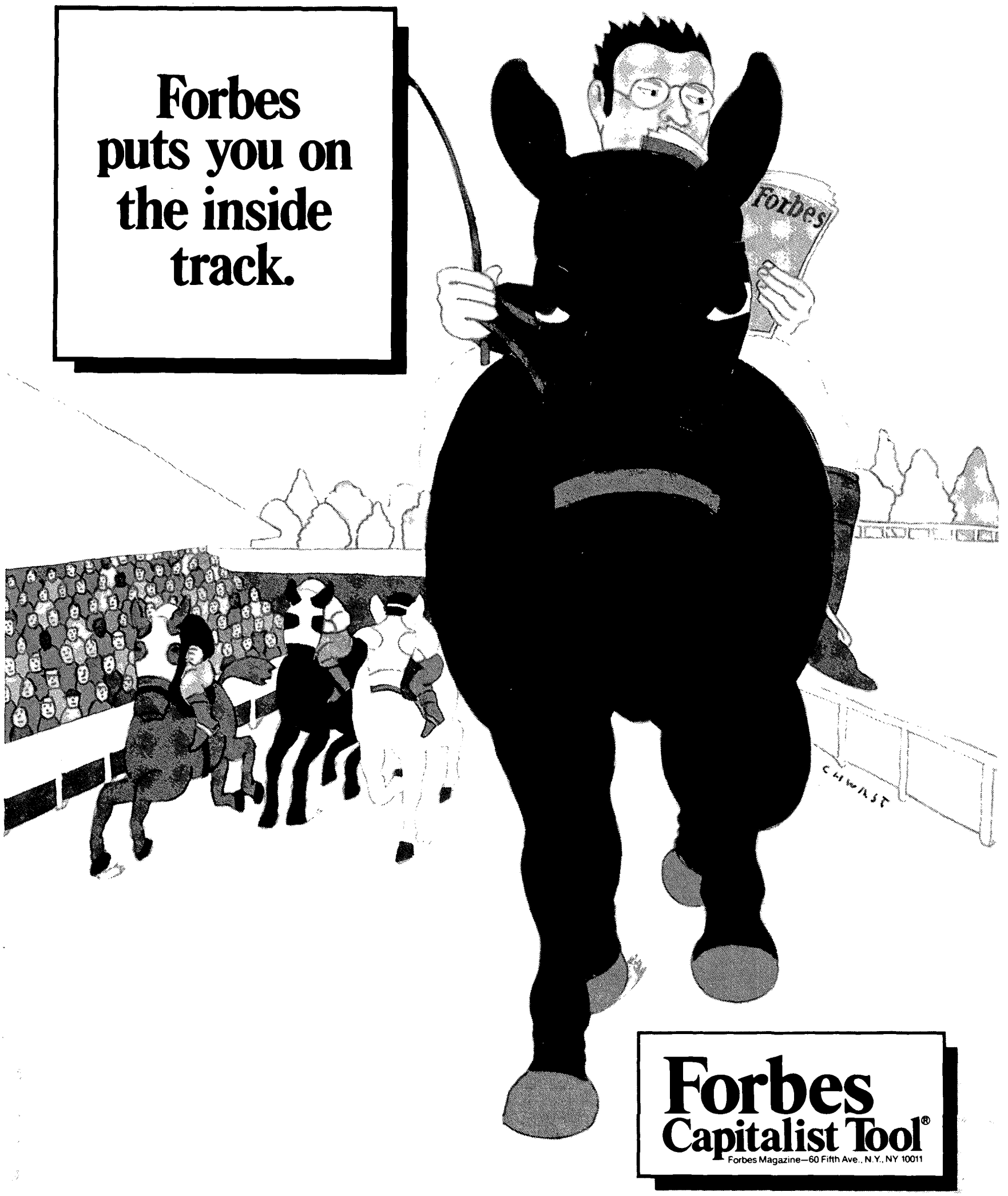

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Israel and the Media

Are current events in Israel getting fair coverage?

In December of 1987, an Israeli civilian was stabbed by Arabs in the Gaza territory, administered by Israel. On the following day, four Gaza Arabs were killed by an automobile driven by an Israeli. The two events were totally unrelated. Yet, the rumor spread that the Arab deaths were revenge murders by the Israelis. Rioting broke out and spread into Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank"), also administered by Israel. It was the beginning of the "intifada," which still goes on. The media have covered and continue to cover this uprising extensively. Are they doing it fairly?

What are the facts?

■ The conflict between the Israeli government and the Arabs in the areas administered by Israel, the so-called "intifada," is essentially a minor regional one. It does not compare in scope, in violence and in the number of people killed or injured to the many other conflicts going on in the world right at this time, such as the conflict between the Basques and Spain; between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; and between Moslems, Hindus and Sikhs in India. And there are many more. Just as with the Arab-Israel conflict, no easy or early solution seems at hand.

■ Yet, while the "intifada" is only one of many regional conflicts, the volume of its coverage in the media has made it appear to be a major world event. There are over 250 press and t.v. reporters accredited in Israel, a tiny country the size of New Jersey and with only half the population of New Jersey. This large media contingent is second only in number to that of Washington and Moscow—and less than that of such key news centers as London, Paris, Bonn, New Delhi, Peking or Tokyo. Naturally, all of these reporters must produce daily stories in order to justify their presence. This results in much journalistic overkill. *The Washington Post*, for instance, reports in an internal audit that. . .during a 5-month period in 1988, they published over 300,000 words on the "intifada," more than two articles daily, one-quarter of which appeared on the front page. That was the most intense coverage by the *Post* of any continuing story. In contrast, when in one day 65 Shi'ites were killed in one of the brotherly battles in neighboring Lebanon, the *Post* gave that only 600 words, in an article on page 15.

■ But it isn't just the intensity of coverage that casts serious doubt about the fairness of the media. It's primarily the slant that is being given to the news, both in the print media and on television. Television, especially, thrives on "action bites," short dramatic scenes with potential to get the viewer involved. For instance, we see over and over again pictures of teenage boys throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers, and the soldiers chasing those teenagers with guns and clubs. That inevitably creates the impression of Israel as the bully or the Goliath, and of the "Palestinians" as defenseless Davids. The opposite is true, of course. Israel is a beleaguered country surrounded by implacable enemies, who incessantly plot its destruction. The "intifada" is part of that never-ending war.

■ The media do not show the hundreds of Israeli soldiers and civilians who have been grievously wounded and in some cases killed by rocks and gasoline bombs. They do not show the Arabs setting countless arson fires, in which over 25,000 acres of forest—every tree having lovingly been planted by hand—have been destroyed. They do not show the attacks on Jewish farms, the wanton destruction of industrial and public service facilities, the fire bombing of hundreds of buses, and the ruthless killing of livestock. They do not show the PLO terror aimed at the "Palestinians" themselves. In the last seventeen months of the "intifada" dozens of Palestinian Arabs have been murdered by the PLO, hundreds injured, many critically. This campaign of intimidation has increased since Yasir Arafat allegedly renounced terrorism.

■ In the few cases in which fuller coverage of the conflict was attempted on t.v., such coverage usually did turn out to be more "show-biz" than serious reporting. ABC's reportage "Six Days Plus Twenty Years" was so blatantly anti-Israel in tone that Arab countries rushed to use it as a propaganda film. Peter Jennings on ABC insistently perpetuates the odious comparison of Israel with South Africa. T.V. interviews with people in the territories invariably show reasonably middle class intellectuals and professionals with whom the American viewer can identify—never the arsonists, the bus bombers and the throwers of Molotov cocktails. The occasional Israeli spokesman that gets trotted out is almost always a member of the radical left or of the so-called "Peace Now" movement, quite unrepresentative of mainline Israeli thinking.

The media do not give the "intifada" fair coverage. It's partly the sheer volume of the coverage, which gives this minor regional conflict perceived importance that it doesn't have. It also lies in the persistent anti-Israel slant that permeates the reporting in all media. Finally, the media, almost without exception, focus on the immediate "drama" and do not explore the history and background of this conflict. The most important point, always omitted, is that the conflict between Israel and the "Palestinians" is not the core problem in the area. The core problem is the unremitting obsession of the Arab states to destroy Israel, their refusal to make peace with it, or to lift the economic boycott against Israel—regardless of what disposition may ultimately be made of the "West Bank." Israel, more even than other beleaguered pro-Western nations, is the target of disinformation and unfair reporting. Largely because it is a dependable friend and ally of the United States, the Jewish state is another victim of the "blame America first" bias in the media.

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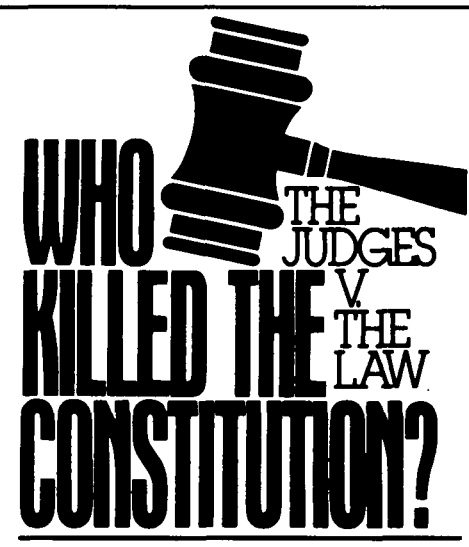

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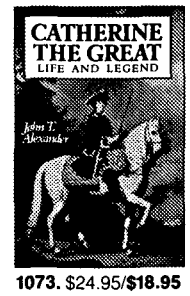

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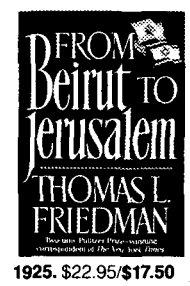

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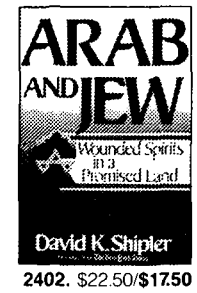

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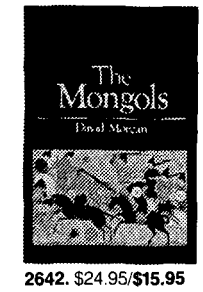

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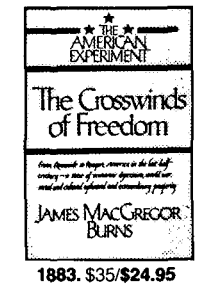

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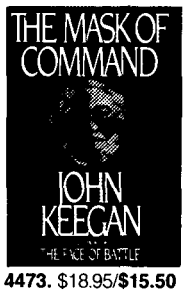

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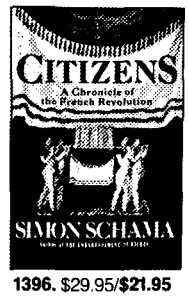

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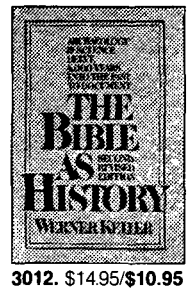

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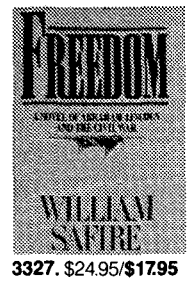

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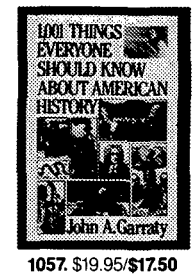

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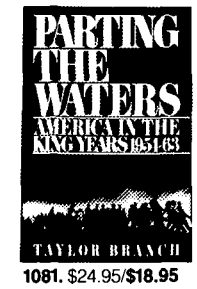

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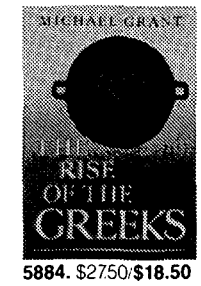

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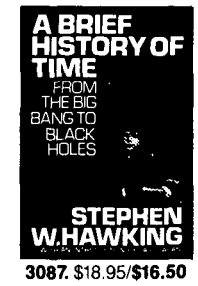

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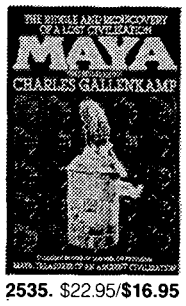

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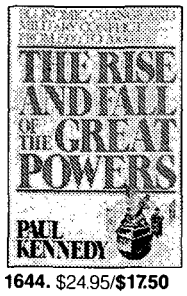

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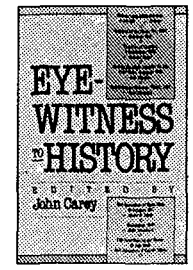

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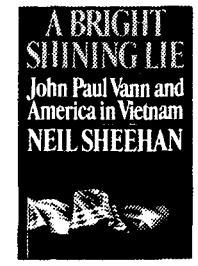

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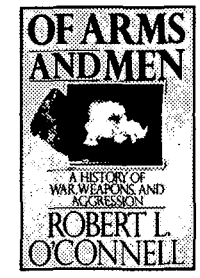

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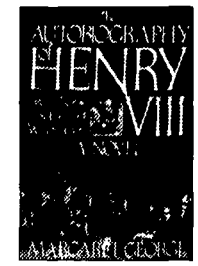

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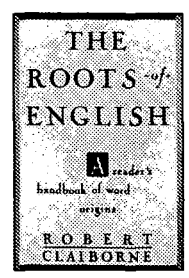

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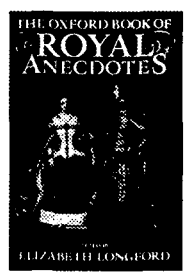

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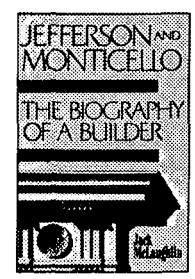

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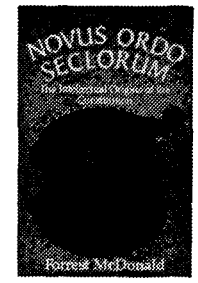

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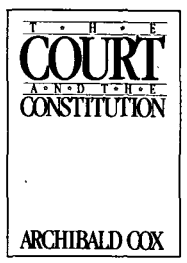

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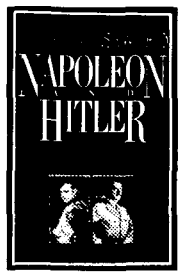

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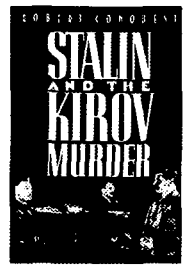

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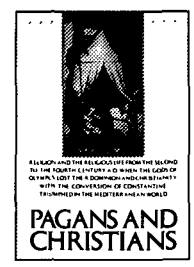

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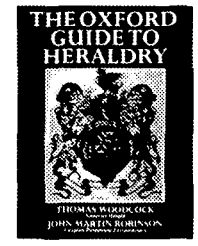

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THE CONTINUING CRISIS

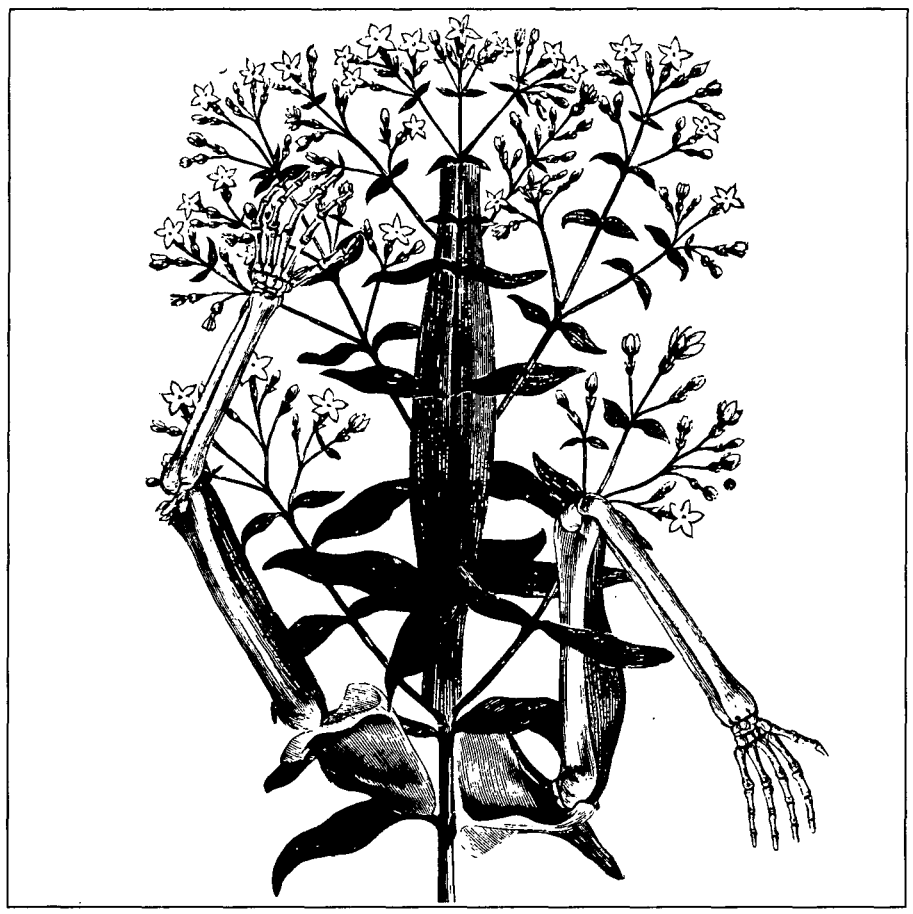
• The days of August 1989 grew progressively shorter, yet it turned out to be one long month. President Bush joined the hostage wars and came out of them wrapped in yellow ribbons. Sen. Robert Dole and HUD Secretary Jack Kemp renewed their guerrilla attacks of Campaign '88. Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee shot down the nomination of Mr. William Lucas as assistant attorney general for civil rights, and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell duly warned Mr. Bush not even to think of pushing Mr. Lucas through while the Senate was in recess. In other words, a typical Republican month, even while Mr. Bush's popularity and the Dow Jones industrial average zoomed to unseen heights. Meanwhile, in Warsaw, Poland, Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki was elected prime minister, quite a comeback for a man who the *New Republic* in January 1982 reported had been killed by General Jaruzelski's storm troopers. This time around the same magazine asks, "Is the right to govern Poland something anyone sensible should want right now?"—no, let's wait another fifty years.

• Elsewhere in the quaking Commie world, hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians formed a human chain across their small countries on the fiftieth anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin pact. The authorities in Moscow, accustomed to comparable lines in front of the Soviet capital's meat and vodka markets, did not intervene. In other signs of human progress, *Molodoi Kommunist*, the official publication of the Young Communist League, has reprinted a series of articles by the late Mr. Leon Trotsky from 1923, and Mr. Vince Neil, the tattooed lead singer of the heavy-metal band Motley Crue, displayed his gift for cultural exchange when he greeted 180,000 rock fans in Lenin Stadium with "How the f--- you doin', Moscow?" and then instructed his listeners: "I want you to say, 'f---.' " Reported the *Los Angeles Times*: "He shouted the word again and again in a steady rhythm, with the fans shouting along."

• Contrast these earthy lyrics with the serene love poem allegedly penned by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which the Iranian news agency released in English translation on August 11. The final stanzas are particularly seductive: "The preachers' well-meant sermons leave me cold,/the tippler breathing wine speaks words of gold/ You want to know what brought me to my senses?/The tavern wench whose fair hand wine dispenses." In an editorial published on August 25, the *New York Times* declared that the women's movement is "here to stay," which the women of Islamic Iran have known all along. On August 17 the country agreed to import a million yards of black *chador* cloth from Oman in response to growing domestic demand. Still, that the *Times* had a point was confirmed by officers in Greenwich, Connecticut, who arrested Mr. Curtis Rock after finding more than 125 vials of crack stuffed into the bra and panties he wears as a matter of course.

• In London, after moving fifty-six times since February, Mr. and Mrs. Salman Rushdie have separated, and in New York City, Miss Mary Travers became the latest modern woman to make a public spectacle of the illegal abortion she once had. It happened in 1960, when she was young, divorced, and already the mother of a baby girl. Explains the female member of the famed folk trio: "While Peter and Paul were willing to travel with one baby, none of us could have gone on the road with two." In Yaounde, Cameroon, pop star Obama Essoma Juliot de Feu —whom you will probably recognize by his stage name, Mongo Faya—is being sued for divorce by fifteen of his forty-five wives because he won't buy them a car. Sr. Alfredo Aguirre, 17, tossed a Basque beret twenty-five-plus yards to win the fourth annual hat-hurling championship in Baracaldo, Spain.

• In other competitions, the New York City-based National Association of Uniform Manufacturers and Distributors has named Philadelphia's finest the best-dressed police force in the nation. At the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, Miss Kristin M. Baker, 20, received the academy's highest cadet honor when she was selected first captain of the Corps of Cadets. "It's kind of weird when she yells commands, because it's a higher-pitched voice," said one 19-year-old cadet from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and there is literary precedent for his concern. As the unfortunate French army lieutenant in Irwin Shaw's story "Hamlets of the World" had been told at St. Cyr, "An order given in the soprano register, Mister, is not calculated to drive troops to impossible glories." On August 10, President Bush announced his choice of Army Gen. Colin L. Powell, the former national security adviser, as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This time the *New Republic* was ahead of the curve, predicting fifteen months ago that Powell would land the job.



• Otherwise, America's neoliberals have just plain run out of workable ideas. Miss Jeanette Benton of the Evansville, Indiana, Housing Authority Board, hoping to legalize the living arrangements of many of the couples shacked up in her city's public housing, found no takers in a raffle she organized that offered a complete wedding and reception package. Evidently, Miss Benton has an incomplete understanding of incentives and made no provisions regarding locale, which for today's young couples is the *sine qua non* to any marriage plans. Thus Miss Joanne Corker of Los Angeles spent four months looking for the perfect wedding spot, which turned out to be the Wee Kirk o' the Heather funeral chapel at Forest Lawn Memorial Park. If your taste runs to something livelier, you can emulate Mr. Ronald Scopinich, 44, and Miss Valerie Dodge, 47, who on August 18 were married—he for the third time, she for the eighth—at the Mustang Ranch brothel in Sparks, Nevada.

• Sparks of a different sort flew in Albuquerque, New Mexico, when a 150-pound black bear, in town on a visit from her home in the wilds of the Sandia Mountains, climbed a 25-foot utility pole, Crocodile Dundee style, and survived a 7,200-volt jolt. At an animal refuge in Pasadena, California, a raccoon named Voltage has spent a year recovering from burns suffered when she stumbled into a 16,500-volt switch at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Her neighbors include a paralyzed hawk, a kangaroo with cataracts, and three "trash bears" from Yosemite whose taste for human garbage dooms them to captivity for life. Not a happy place.

• At an undisclosed location in the state of Tennessee, Miss Jeanette Lord

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mailed in 5,500 pennies to cover a $55 speeding ticket, which proved a blow to 95-year-old Mr. Ford Mason, the inventor of the penny gum ball machine who died on August 16 in Delray Beach, Florida. From Perigueux, France, comes word that the guardian of the Lascaux Cave, M. Jacques Marsal, has died at 63. Death also took Mr. Ole Bardahl, 87, of *Miss Bardahl* hydroplane fame. Congressmen Mickey Leland and Larkin Smith died in separate airplane crashes, and at 5:30 a.m. on August 22 in Oakland, California, Dr. Huey Newton, the erstwhile Black Panther, was shot dead by a drug dealer. Mr. David Horowitz spoke for few of Dr. Newton's former comrades when he told *USA Today* on the day of the shooting: "Today is a day of release for me. As long as he was alive, a lot of people were in danger." —*WP*

(RET will return next month.)

CORRESPONDENCE

Closing the Book on Quayle

RE: "Deconstructing the Danny Quayle Reader" (*TAS*, August 1989): Ours is a quantitative society in which quality, especially in people, is suspect.

You have alarmed the majority. Please continue to do so.

—T. I. Parkinson, Jr.
New York, New York

In your August reply to the many hostile letters received in response to "A Danny Quayle Reader" you sounded remarkably like one of my guilty clients trying to explain his innocence after being found in an otherwise empty room, smoking gun in hand, standing next to the bullet-riddled body of an unarmed man. My unsolicited (and free) advice to you is to plead guilty and throw yourself on the mercy of the court. . . .

—Adrian L. DiLuzio
Attorney-at-Law
Mineola, New York

As a 16-year *TAS* subscriber and someone who walked precincts for Goldwater in 1964 at age 15, permit me a few comments. . . . Your June cover and page 13 article were on target. Quayle's a lightweight. Now a conservative lightweight in the Senate may be okay, but as Vice President? Come on. The outraged letters in the August issue only illustrate the sad fact that there are as many kneejerk conservatives as kneejerk liberals.

—Tim Fennell
Los Altos, California

Congrats on not flinching to call a Quayle a quail, brickbats for knuckling under to knee-jerk "conservatives" (so-called) in your last issue. *I* buy the *Spectator* because you guys, by your irreverence, continually puncture the media's Blimp stereotype of the right wing. *I'm* renewing my subscription for three years to counter those geeks who've written in to fuss and moan.

—Robert Leirer Justice
Logansport, Indiana

Your response to the letters was thin-skinned and especially unattractive from one who loves to dish it out. Only your last paragraph was worthy.

As a parody of the liberal press, your Quayle flail missed the mark. Any other purpose was unworthy. Accept the criticism.

—Andrew L. Carlson
Northport, New York

As an avid reader of *TAS*, I say it's worth the price of the subscription to have read R. Emmett Tyrrell's rebuttal.

—Jack Nudelman
Buffalo, New York

I was outraged at "Why Danny Can't Read," as most of your readers apparently were, but refrained from venting my spleen at the time out of fear that I might subject you to undue abuse. With your spread on the subject in the August issue, however, I have decided to forget my silly fears. Maybe one more letter will help. . . .

The first thing I must say is that I simply can't believe that Quayle's remarks had anything directly to do with the original broadside, your claims notwithstanding. There is simply no proportion between the one and the other. A few of your wet-behind-the-ears apprentices must have got the idea that they could have a good time at Quayle's expense, and you let them have their way and thereby failed to exercise the required editorial judgment. Right?

At any rate, your reluctance to admit blame reminds me of Mike Dukakis, an expert at evading responsibility and a very arrogant fellow: Your reply reads like one of his recent speeches. . . .

—George D. Waldman
Reading, Massachusetts

I am sure you are quite sick of people writing to you about the Dan Quayle piece in the June issue. Please read one more.

I thought it was great! Our conservative torchbearer not only made a stupid comment but blasphemed the name of conservatism by exalting the *New Republic*. (Egads!) I applaud your courage and biting satire in bringing our wayward Hoosier back to reality.

Despite what one of those thin-skinned respondents said about terminating his subscription to your publication, I, for one, am going to renew it for another year.

—John N. Snader
Lititz, Pennsylvania

Having the poor judgment and execrable taste to publish, in your June issue, a puerile lampooning of the Vice President of the United States, you now, in your August issue, have the monstrous effrontery, O pompous ass, to call yourself his friend.

—William T. St. Clair
Irvington, Virginia

Wow. What's wrong with these people that they'd get so bent out of shape over the Quayle article? And to accuse *TAS* of sliding into liberalism simply because it poked a little fun at Danny.

Bob, I knew the *New Republic*, the *New Republic* was my friend, *TAS* is no *New Republic*. Thank God.

—Chuck Fowler
Bellemont, Arizona

P.S. Those conservatives need to be reminded that a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

Your June issue lampooning of the Vice President was right on target, and I was delighted to see you stand up to the appalling party-line response, in your August issue, of so many of your readers.

Like many conservatives, I cringe at every malapropism and goofy comment of the Vice President. And since when has that sacred office become a shield for an incumbent? As a supporter of candidate Bush, I was so shocked by his choice of Quayle for a running mate that I feared he might have blown the election (at the time, the race was damned close). I still shudder at the thought of Quayle's succeeding him to the presidency, and Quayle's contemptible performance when interviewed by Tom Bethell did nothing to calm my fears.

The best friends the Vice President (and the country) has are those conservatives who, by acknowledging his shortcomings, may motivate him to persevere with his on-the-job training. Keep after him!

—Robert D. Hughes
New York, New York

As one who went to college in Indiana in the sixties, surely you know the source of the Vice President's difficulty with your publication. He went to DePauw. Had he attended Wabash, I am sure he would enjoy the contents of your magazine as much as I do.

—John L. Ryder
Memphis, Tennessee

FAIR Cries Foul

Tom Bethell's article in the July 1989 issue, "The Mexican Kleptocracy," cannot be permitted to go unchallenged.

Bethell cites the fact that Hong Kong has a labor shortage for the proposition that population growth doesn't create problems. His point is that where economies are able to run without the encumbrance of government interference, as in Hong Kong or in certain northern border regions in Mexico, communities are able to absorb huge numbers of workers in very small spaces.

All this reminds me of someone's comment several years back, that you could fit the entire population of the world in one-acre plots in Texas and still have plenty of room to spare.

Hong Kong, like Manhattan and perhaps now Miami, is a unique creature of location. It is strategically placed where international traders and shippers would want to be located. It is not self-sufficient and there is no way that the United States could be (or frankly would want to be) one huge Manhattan or Hong Kong.

If a society's only objective is to try to increase its numbers to the point where everyone lives stacked atop one another, then Bethell's point would be perfectly sound. But most Americans do not want that as their future. Our basic point is that immigration policy must be fashioned with reference to a whole series of competing values, many of which Bethell may not recognize. One can still be a free market capitalist and acknowledge certain community values in maintaining open space, livable population density, and responsible resource consumption. And, if the entire globe looked like Manhattan

(continued on page 50)

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EDITORIALS

BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

One very reassuring truth has emerged from the epic controversy between feminists and this fellow Al Neuharth, to wit: deeply rooted social values cannot be obliterated by ideological campaigns. Neuharth is the publishing genius whose creation, *USA Today*, has proved that newsprint can be just as vacuous as a television screen. Now his comments on the declining beauty of the Republic's female flight attendants have set off a debate. In any other civilized country the debate would be over the truth of his allegation or the nature of beauty, but in America, where the Puritans once roamed, the debate is over banishing beauty from life.

It is a matter of ideological dogma among feminists that female beauty is a piffle, never to be valued as a requirement in employment or, so far as I can ascertain, in any other human relationship. Hence the feminists' thought patrol has fallen on Neuharth for having expressed the notion in *USA Today* that the beauteous "sky girls" of yesteryear have been replaced by "aging women who are tired of their jobs or by flighty young men who have trouble balancing a cup of coffee or tea."

The First Amendment is well and good, says the thought patrol, but Neuharth's statement goes too far. One lady executive at his own news corporation notified him that his column would have been spiked were she his editor. That is the press policy of Mrs. Imelda Marcos and of various tin pot dictators of unhappy memory, and it is about time that America's militant reformers come out and admit that what they really favor for America is a one-party state.

Apparently Betty Friedan is doing what she can to advance dictatorship in America. She and her colleagues are establishing a media center at the University of Southern California to monitor how women are hired, promoted, and covered in media. Woe to the woman whom the gods have endowed or to those others who believe that beauty has its place on the evening news, primetime television, or wherever else Friedan's agents might strike. When her dictatorship is in place, plain women and unsightly men will replace all the pretty faces in America. Good-looking Americans will be on hard times. The cosmetics and fashion industries will founder.

But is this last great civil rights campaign warranted and is it even feasible? It seems apparent that most Americans, no matter what their personal endowments might be, value comeliness in both the male and the female of the species. My guess is that even the feminist heart skips a beat when a good looking man or woman enters the room. Americans value personal appearances so highly that there are vast industries devoted to assuring lush and lustrous hair, eyes that Goya would be proud of, terrific skin, and statuesque figures.

The feminist campaign is an exercise in self-delusion. Is there one out there among Neuharth's critics who herself has not inherited some element of pulchritude that she would not readily put to a useful purpose when the opportunity arrived? I have never heard of any woman, even a feminist, crowing about her bad looks or inferior taste. All Americans are taken by beauty and no ideological campaign against it has a chance.

What true progressives might do is widen the American conception of beauty. Broaden it from the sterile obsession with the Barbie-doll look in women and whatever the exemplary look is in men, rather than banishing all concern for physical charm as some rancorous mullahs might. Think of the great Grover Cleveland, William McKinley, Sarah Bernhardt, and all the most arresting sopranos of yesteryear—Lilli Lehmann at some 200 pounds was one of my favorites. There was a day when Americans deemed corpulence a mark of beauty and admired it in entertainers. Graying hair and bald pates were also highly esteemed, if done just right.

If the feminists believe Americans will ever countenance plainness in those who cavort before them, they are mistaken. Neuharth may have fallen for the contemporary delusion that there is but one standard of beauty, but he is right to claim that looks matter. What is more, it would be a grave injustice to penalize Tom Brokaw because he is an Adonis or Diane Sawyer for her well-turned ankles. □

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post *column syndicated by King Features.*

GORBY OF MAYBERRY

Frequently an international news story is received differently in different parts of the world. Here in America the unfolding drama of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms is a soothing story. In London this summer the drama evoked alarm.

Here we take the stories of Soviet strikes, ethnic unrest, and ideological squabbling *cum grano salis*. President Gorbachev's commanding presence in Moscow reassures us. A generation of Americans accustomed to television sitcoms and docudramas—all with reliable beginnings, middles, and ends—has arrived at the judgment that Gorbachev has brought perestroika through its beginning. Now he is leading it and his country through an exciting middle. Eventually, after the show breaks for a deodorant commercial, and perhaps a bran cereal commercial too, the screen will brighten with a happy ending: Mikhail and the smiling Gorbachev family, standing on the front porch, all waving back at their American audience. The Soviet Union has been transformed into a Slavic America!

Perhaps it is the sunny way in which the American media cover the Soviet Union that encouraged the buffoons in the United States House of Representatives to thrust aside serious minds and transform this summer's deliberations over the defense budget into high farce. Essential weapons were cut, along with research and development funds. Idiotic pork-barrel programs were slipped into the budget, as were such militarily dubious programs as day-care centers and minority set-asides. Yes, the Honorable Nick Mavroules (D-MA), who is no friend to military spending, has taken an expansive interest in the military this time around. He filed an amendment to the military spending bill requiring minority set-asides for the "disadvantaged." I suppose this means that henceforth Congress is decreeing that the American military must, in every battle, ensure that a prescribed ratio of the "disadvantaged" be killed, injured, or decorated.

Meanwhile, in other parts of the world the news from the Soviet Union is having a sobering effect. This summer's strikes among Soviet coal miners

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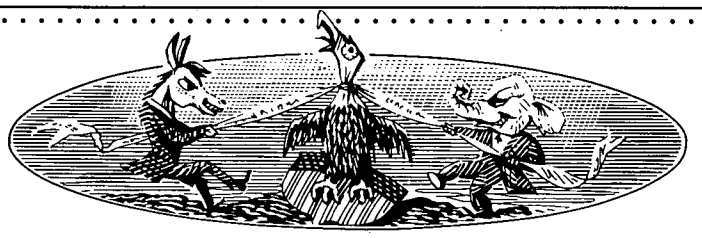
highlighted the worst season of industrial unrest in Russia since Lenin's time. The ethnic violence in the Caucasus and in Central Asia continues and with growing fury. The unrest will go on, for there does not seem to be anything that Moscow can do to end it short of resorting to the military, an expedient that will only exacerbate the regime's dire economic problems. Moreover, anger is spreading over shortages, specifically food shortages.

In the Soviet Parliament criticism now besets Gorbachev on all sides. Boris Yeltsin leads a group that chides him for going too slowly. The far more ominous Yegor Ligachev leads a group that forthrightly urges a return to censoring the press and suppressing Gorbachev's democratization. How serious are the challenges to Gorbachev? Well, while we Americans consumed our press's good news from Moscow, a lead story on the front page of the *Sunday Times* in London reported: "The battle in the Kremlin has become fiercer than at any time since Stalin ousted Trotsky and installed one-man, one-party rule." The report went on to reveal that Gorbachev had been sorely pressed by Ligachev and his supporters in an acrimonious meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist party.

A recent issue of the *Economist*, the British newsweekly that is probably the world's most informative, gloomily reports a growing dissatisfaction within the Soviet Communist party. That is not particularly good news, for the group most likely to gain from Communist party decline is the very group backing Mr. Ligachev and the champions of repression, the Soviet military.

The difference between American and British coverage of this summer's momentous events in the Soviet Union is arresting. If the American press is right that things are going swimmingly for reform, I shall be grateful. But somehow I feel that the British tone of skepticism is better justified. It is not just the power that lurks behind Ligachev that makes me worry. It is the fate of reform in China. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



DIVIDED OVER DEFENSE

by Tom Bethell

In recent months the confusion that is U.S. defense policy has become worse than ever. The basic problem is that we have something called the Department of Defense, which spends about $300 billion a year, but we do not have any defense. One reason is that we signed in 1972 an extremely unwise treaty (the ABM treaty), which postulates that the country is safer if undefended. As a result, our so-called defense spending is little more than an elaborately disguised public-works and middle-class welfare program. One would be inclined to recommend the court martialing of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were it not that they are rightly subordinate to civil authority, and it was the civil authorities who supported, signed, and ratified the ABM treaty. Since then four presidents have submitted meekly to its provisions, even while claiming that the Soviets have violated the same treaty. (And the Soviets now admit to such violations.)

But then again, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have not been entirely innocent. There was some sentiment in the Reagan Administration to repudiate the ABM treaty, but this was rebuffed by the Joint Chiefs on the peculiar grounds that the Soviets, once unconstrained by the terms of the treaty, would be better positioned to take advantage of the change by reconfiguring their military forces. In short, the Joint Chiefs believe they face an adversary that is constrained from acting more aggressively by a signed piece of paper. All such adversaries are implicitly law-abiding, and therefore not a serious cause for concern.

Today the situation is worse than ever. Not only have we not given up on arms control treaties. Current weapons acquisition is driven by prospective arms control treaties. We supposedly need certain new weapons now so that we will have the option of negotiating them away in the future. This turns out to be the Pentagon equivalent of the Keynesian public-works remedy for a depression: dig holes in the ground and fill them up again. The latest muddle surrounds the vulnerability of our land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. These are placed in fixed silos, and it is supposedly the case (and may well be the case) that Soviet missiles are now accurate enough to score direct or disabling hits on them.

Just as we have earth, air, and water, so (military doctrine teaches) we must have a "strategic triad" of land-based, air-based, and sea-based missiles. The first of these is now believed to be vulnerable; and so (to preserve the triad) this vulnerability must be repaired. How? By making the land-based missile mobile. The Soviets themselves have put some of their own missiles on railroad cars, others on trucks (the SS 24 and SS 25, respectively), and these can obviously be hidden with ease. So (Pentagon planners argue) we must make our missiles mobile, too. By putting them on rails, or on roads? The Bush Administration pondered this problem earlier this year and came up with an expensive solution. We would procure both a "rail-mobile" MX missile *and* a "road-mobile" Midgetman missile.

It was interesting to note the news media/congressional reaction to this decision. "Bush Moves To Compromise On U.S. Strategic Missiles," was the *Washington Post*'s page one headline. Resolving the difficulty of choosing between two options by choosing both is not normally called a compromise. But that is the word that was used, time and again, by people who are not normally enthusiastic about additions to the U.S. strategic arsenal. Conservatives should have been suspicious at this point, but few seemed to pay any attention.

The fourth paragraph of the *Washington Post* story (by R. Jeffrey Smith and David Hoffman) read as follows: "The decision to pursue an MX-Midgetman combination also reflects what high-ranking officials describe as a desire by the administration to resolve the issue soon so it can draft a negotiating position at the U.S.-Soviet strategic arms talks." On an inside page we read: "Obtaining broad backing for a missile modernization plan is considered by many officials to be a prerequisite to completion of a new arms treaty, because U.S. and Soviet negotiators have disagreed about whether mobile missiles should be allowed. If Bush decides to pursue the mobile weapons, it will presumably pave the way for a superpower agreement on how to constrain such missiles and verify compliance with the constraints. Substantial progress on this issue has been blocked in the past by U.S. opposition to mobile missile deployment."

The tail of arms control is wagging the dog of procurement. Here is the plan, in plain English: the Soviets have two mobile missiles, and we wish they didn't. Therefore, the best way to get rid of them is to get some ourselves, and then negotiate away both theirs

Tom Bethell is The American Spectator*'s Washington correspondent.*

Strange New Respect

Lucy Rudenborg, a reader in Wisconsin, has nominated Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) as recipient of the 1989 Strange New Respect Award "for signing on as a co-sponsor of Sen. Chris Dodd's multibillion dollar income redistribution/social engineering scheme, the so-called Act for Better Child Care." Do readers have other evidence of Sen Hatch's growing sensitivity, compassion, etc.? Or is he innocent of the charge? Would the senator care to explain why he is *not* eligible for the award? If readers have any other nominations they should let me know by mid-October. —*TB*

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and ours in an arms control treaty. U.S. officials won't actually come right out and say this is the plan, because if it is to retain plausibility there must be a convincing pretense that the mobile weapons, once purchased, will in fact be deployed.

The Soviets now welcome all such arms control proposals, because the experience of the last seventeen years has shown them that they do not have to comply with the treaties they sign. They can afford to accept any and every verification provision we impose on them, because, in the event that they subsequently ignore these provisions, we do nothing about it. We are like an ineffectual referee who continually calls "foul" in a soft voice but is quite incapable of stopping the game. Conservatives have consistently overlooked this point, too, even though there has been a fair amount of breast-beating on the issue by former Reagan officials. Conservatives insist that arms control treaties be *verifiable*, mistakenly believing that, once the referee is provided with the necessary rules, he will halt the game if a violation is detected. In practice, however, as the Soviets now know, the game will proceed in total disregard of U.S. complaints about Soviet violations. It seems that the distinction between verification and compliance is too difficult for most Americans to grasp.

This has had the following perverse effect. The Soviets, once wary of strict verification, now welcome it, because it permits them to conduct intrusive inspections of U.S. weapons plants. We have symmetrical rights, of course, but they are in practice meaningless because if we claim to have detected an infraction the Soviets (and therefore the leading U.S. media) will pooh-pooh it. The *New York Times* will report an "alleged" violation on an inside page and the game will proceed as though nothing had happened.

But the situation is worse than that, as was shown two years ago in the INF negotiations. This ended in a treaty that eliminated from the U.S. arsenal one of our most advanced weapons—the conventional (non-nuclear) ground-launched Cruise missile. Our insistence that the treaty be verifiable led the Soviets to riposte that, in that case, we would have to eliminate the conventional (as well as the nuclear) intermediate-range Cruise missile because the two were indistinguishable by normal intelligence methods. Against the advice of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, President Reagan accepted this loss rather than lose the treaty. Accurate enough to hit individual buildings from a range of many hundreds of miles, the non-nuclear Cruise was and is the answer to the anti-nuke brigades. Now the Soviets will try to use the same "verification" argument with George Bush's team in order to eliminate the sea-launched Cruise missile (both conventional and nuclear)—another weapon they don't like.

It makes no sense for us to enter arms negotiations whose effect is to eliminate useful hi-tech weapons like the non-nuclear Cruise and to induce the purchase of useless and costly weapons like the mobile MX and Midgetman. The latter won't work as advertised because the U.S., like Europe, plays host to tens of thousands of anti-nuke fanatics who will follow these allegedly mobile weapons wherever they go and report their whereabouts either to the Soviet embassy or to the newspapers. For this reason there were no successful dispersal exercises of the Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe (and this was one of the reasons why we agreed to eliminate them). By the same token, we should not even be thinking of deploying mobile missiles on U.S. territory. Too many Americans think we are the enemy. The Soviets, of course, will not tolerate the domestic obstruction of their own weapons. Consequently, they do have a real advantage over us with mobile missiles. But we should not try to eliminate this advantage by ac-

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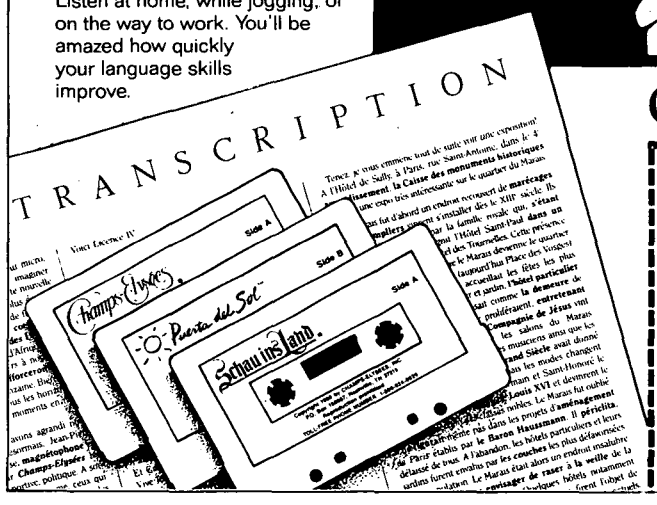

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quiring them ourselves—the fatal premise of symmetry which got us into the arms control mess in the first place.

The way out is to make use of our comparative advantage, which is to say our technological lead. And this means developing and deploying strategic defenses. This is how we should make our ground-based missiles more secure—not by trying to move them about. If it is argued that the new, reformed Soviet Union with its nice leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, makes all this war preparation unnecessary, one answer is to agree and to quote CIA Director William H. Webster, who said last December: "By the year 2000, at least fifteen developing countries will either have produced or be able to build their own ballistic missiles. . . . Much of this critical technology is already diffused throughout the world, is available for other purposes, or can easily be diverted." These Third World missiles may be armed with chemical or biological warheads. Among these fifteen countries: India, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, North Korea. The technological advance that makes missiles more widely available also makes defenses against them not only possible but essential.

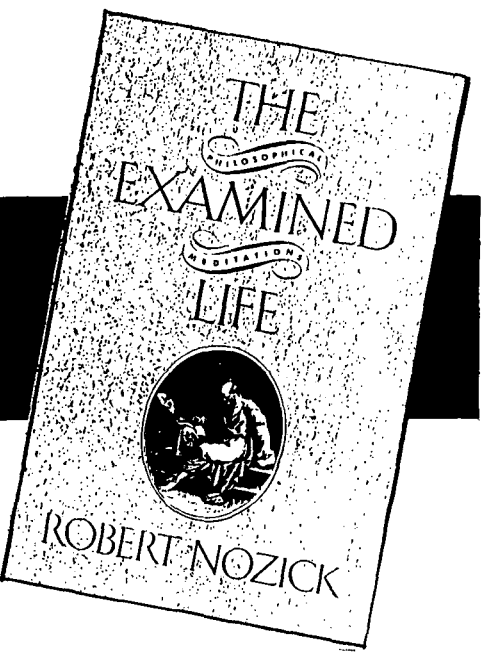
The Bush Administration official who understands all this perhaps better than anyone is Vice President Dan Quayle. In recent months he has given two excellent speeches, emphasizing the need to move ahead with strategic defense. Neither was published by the State Department (which copiously advertised Paul Nitze's nonsense about arms control). Quayle has a good grasp of one of the most serious defects of our present defense structure—Air Force hostility to strategic defenses and to new, computerized technology in general. In a discussion with me earlier this year, Quayle pointed out that from the point of view of the U.S. Air Force, "the problem with Cruise missiles is that there is no pilot—nobody flies them." He went on to say that "some of my friends in the Air Force want to make sure they can have a man in that cockpit."

This, incidentally, is the great defect of the B-2 bomber. It is expensive because the damned thing has to make a return flight to get the pilot home. The B-2 should probably be cancelled. It is basically a World War II weapon, and we are now in a different era.

Within little more than a year, the time elapsed since the end of World War II will be the same as that between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the beginning of the U.S. Civil War. In that earlier period there was a great revolution in naval warfare, with wind-powered, wooden men o' war giving way to steam-powered ironclads. Probably we have experienced a comparable technological revolution in the past forty years, but our miltary leaders and recent commanders-in-chief seem not to know it. Our weapons today—bombers, submarines, battleships, tanks, aircraft carriers, ballistic missiles—are all World War II weapons. And our military commanders all either grew up in World War II or fought in it.

My sense is that Quayle grasps the situation that we are in today better than his elders in the administration not because he is smarter, but precisely because he is younger. World War II was not a formative event for him, and he is not emotionally committed to its weapons. His support of strategic defense within the administration makes it difficult for George Bush to go back on his own 1988 campaign speeches. Quayle's speeches have also criticized the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction. *This* puts him at odds with the national security adviser, Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft—the closest thing we have to high level conflict within the administration. The press has so far ignored it. Scowcroft, 64, was at West Point before Quayle was born. □

"I want to think about living and what is important in life..."



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P. J. O'Rourke

A NEW McCARTHYISM: THE LIST CONTINUES

Readers respond with their own suggestions for the Hall of Shame.

I've got a little list—I've got a little list
Of society offenders who might well be underground,
And who never would be missed—who never would be missed!

. . . the idiot who praises, with enthusiastic tone,
All centuries but this, and every country but his own;

. . . And apologetic statesmen of the compromising kind,
Such as—What-d'ye-call-him—Thing'em-Bob, and likewise—
Never Mind,
And 'St— 'st— 'st— and What's-his-name, and also—
You-know-who—
(The task of filling up the blanks I'd rather leave to you!*)*

—W. S. Gilbert

In *TAS* vol. 22, No. 7, of July 1989, I pleaded for the establishment of a New McCarthyism. We need some means of persecuting neuterers, nutters, and screaming greenies, some way to abuse entitlement tramps, participants in Gorby orgies, men who think the government is their mother, and women who think government can do the mothering for them. Let's give a wedgie to the whiners, criers, and wet smacks in mortar boards. Let's soap the windows of those who would beggar achievement and vandalize the lawn ornaments of magical thinkers and haters of beef, gin, and cigars. Let's tell ghost stories to the mollycoddles who fear atomic power, military strength, and the very puissance of Western Civilization itself and turn the garden hose on people who can't bear their freedoms, their selves, or their society and want to vent those pathetic loathings on us, their betters.

Such was my call to action, and the reader response was heartening. Almost a thousand individuals, institutions, and categories of morons were proposed for execration.

TAS READERS' ENEMIES LIST—THE OVERVIEW

The July "New McCarthyism" article was accompanied by a brief muster roll of nitwits—some 100-odd names with which to chum the waters of indignation. This pilot catalogue wasn't meant to be definitive, nonetheless readers greeted the omission of Teddy Kennedy and Jesse Jackson with howls of indignation. Well, Stalin and Molotov weren't on Sen. Joe's original list.

However, neither the Hymietown Rhymer nor In-The-Drink Eddie received the most Enemies List nominations. That distinction belongs, oddly enough, to Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH). Howie is a terrific fool, of course, and a typical liberal of stinking wealth who's got his pile and would change the rules so nobody else can get another. But there are thousands like Howie. Why did almost a quarter of the *TAS* Enemies List respondents mention Metzenbaum by name? Maybe it's because the NRA has been targeting the Buckeye Bolshie for his disarm-the-populace legislative proposals. (The events in Tiananmen Square have given liberals new impetus on this issue—just think how many poor People's Army soldiers might have been killed if China didn't have the benefits of gun control.) Let that *TAS*/NRA overlap be fair warning to the pink-squeeks. Not only do we conservatives support the Second Amendment, we also exercise our Second Amendment rights. We've got a bunch of guns and all you liberals have is Carl Rowan, who had a trophy-size stoned teenager trapped in his own backyard and couldn't manage a kill shot.

Also surprisingly popular as objects of derision were Linda Ellerbee, Leonard Bernstein, and Ramsey Clark—not exactly America's major trio of power-brokering opinion-molders, if you ask me. But the annoyance factor seemed to outweigh public danger in *TAS* readers' minds. Carl Sagan, Whoopi Goldberg, Mitch Snyder, and C. Everett Koop (that buttinski) each collected a larger number of blackballs than did the ACLU. And Barney Frank was damned with greater frequency than Christopher Dodd or Louis Farrakhan.

More predictably, there was plenty of media-baiting—of Dan Rather and Sam Donaldson in particular and of National Public Radio in general. Ted Turner was repeatedly condemned as a traitor, though not (let free enterprise reign) as a colorist.

Other multiple citations: Al Sharpton, despised as a demagogue. Mike Dukakis, despised as a loser. Molly Yard, despised period (pun semi-intended).

One problem mooted in the original article was inventing a modern punishment to go with a modern McCarthyism. Our jails are too full already. And why should we impose the likes of Howard Metzenbaum on ordinary, decent crack dealers? I had proposed "media overexposure" as a form of revenge—putting our victims in supermarket tabloids and on television talk shows until the public gagged and condemned them to remote dinner theatre productions. But now I'm not so sure. That is, media overexposure worked like a charm on Morton Downey, Jr. but has failed to make the slightest dent in Rob Lowe. (And how much more overexposed can you get?) In this matter the readers were no help at all. In fact, the faint sound of tumbrels rolling can be heard in the background of more than a few Enemies List missives. Hey, dudes, lighten up.

While I'm on the tactless tack of criticizing the paying customers, let me say you folks are a bit rough with black leaders. Sure they spout nonsense but it's in the great nonsense-spouting tradition of Irish, Italians, and Jews before them. This is the way poor people acquire job skills. How can blacks climb the American socioeconomic ladder and get big jobs in industry and government if they don't know how to be as completely full of crap as the rest of us? A bit of invert-bashing was also detectable in some letters. Now, whatever we (and God) may think about this method of birth control, let us not forget that at the core of conservatism is the sanctity of the individual and the privacy of the conscience. Also, if you think there's no such thing as an influential gay conservative, you sure haven't been reading the *Washington Times* lately.

That said, the following register of enemies, including reader comments, is presented in the order received and edited only to eliminate repetition. (I've made my own addenda when I thought the correspondent was seriously receiving radio messages from Neptune on his dentures.) Every nomination has been included no matter how wacky, obscure, imaginary, or dead the choice. There are only three exceptions.

1. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Someone actually proposed Arnold Schwarzenegger for the New Enemies List, and I'm going to save that person's life. Besides, Arnold is a big-time Republican and watching him marry into the Kennedy clan was one of the most satisfying spectacles of the late twentieth century. Here's this family of bigmouths who pride themselves on being rough and tough and suddenly they have a mossback in-law who can snap all their spines with the muscles in his smaller toes.

2. Mike Royko. Somebody suggested him, too, but I'm not having it. In the first place Mike is one of the last newspapermen on earth who still hangs out in bars instead of computer stores or leg-waxing salons. In the second place, he wrote a column a couple of months

P. J. O'Rourke is author, most recently, of Modern Manners *(Atlantic Monthly Press).*

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ago where he wondered where all the bums, soaks, and rummies had gone and then realized they'd all become members of advocacy groups and were demonstrating outside the White House. In the third place, Mike's got a tongue like a lash and I don't want to be in its way.

3. Pat Schroeder. Pat was nominated for the List almost as many times as Molly Yard, but what use is perpetrating arbitary injustice if I can't be arbitrary about it? I don't agree with the Hon. Ms. Schroeder about much, but I like her. She says what she thinks and adds a much-needed lightness of tone to the dreadful House of Representatives. And, as for Pat weeping during her presidential campaign, hell, all I had to do was watch the '88 election and I howled like a tyke in a month-old Pamper.

One more omission: Rep. Mickey Leland (D-TX) died in a plane crash in Ethiopia while this piece was being written. Congressman Leland was named by a number of readers but common decency demands that we forego his inclusion. Instead, we'll put his staff on the list. Leland's aides bitched loudly about the "inadequate" efforts to find their boss. The Pentagon deployed one C-5 cargo plane, three C-141 cargo planes, four C-130 search and rescue planes, four UH-60 helicopters, a weather satellite, and a U-2 spy plane in the hunt for Leland. Usually when this kind of taxpayer money is spent on a Texas congressman, it's for purposes of prosecution.

THE LIST ITSELF

But before we begin the actual list, let's hear from a couple of people who eschewed naming names and took broad philosophical views instead.

One Keith Roberts suggests that "Before we exorcise the left, let's straighten out our own ranks. . . . With Reagan came fellow travelers from the left—Reagan Democrats and religious Nazis and kinder, gentler Welfare State Conservatives.

"Sure, crush the lefties, but save some ideological muscle for the brownshirts and hairshirts of the right: Wannabe bureaucrat businessmen and bible-toting bomb-heaving Christians."

Thank you for sharing, Keith, and keep your head down.

John Poulin of Flin Flon, Manitoba, worries about the effect our housecleaning may have on his large, wishy-washy nation:

"Usually I leave American issues to Americans, but the repercussions of Tail-Gunnerism redux are bound to spill over into this benighted land. . . . Large numbers of sensitive citizens here were traumatized by the fear-crazed thousands who tumbled northwards during the last purge and began drinking heavily thus making the roads hazardous."

Mr. Poulin gives some sage advice to fugitives from political ridicule: "All expatriots and expelled rabble who drift northward should dress warmly as winters here are coldish. . . . Most of our politicians are either lunatics or scoundrels. . . . Chances are good that your riff-raff can get good jobs working for the government."

Finally, there was a solitary letter of dissent. Phil Maggitti of Elverson, Pennsylvania, wrote: "In the midst of an otherwise admirable and occasionally funny piece in your July issue, P. J. 'He's-No-Tom-Wolfe' O'Rourke takes the obligatory cheap shot at animal rights activists. . ." Phil had a lot more to say but a bear ate him.

Now, the list.

Thomas J. Bieter of Duluth, Minnesota, kicks off with:

- *Minnesota State Rep. Phyllis Kahn,* who introduced a bill which would have granted the vote to 12-year-olds. She was serious. Arguments against her bill, she charged, display an "adult supremacist attitude."

Robert W. Somers of Carrboro, North Carolina, names:

- *The Raleigh News and Observer:* This birdcage liner has kept the ravings of Cockburn, McGrory and Lewis while purging the writings of R. E. Tyrrell and Joe Bob Briggs.

They pulled Joe Bob Briggs? We *are* aghast.

Nicholas A. Damask II of Cincinnati, Ohio, who signs himself "an obviously racist-sexist-fascist-homophobic college student," suggests:

- *Sen. Christopher "Nicaraguan Foreign Minister" Dodd* (D-CT)
- *Rep. Henry B. Gonzales* (D-TX)
- *Rep. Edward Boland* (D-MA)
- *Whoopi Goldberg*
- *Robin "Wish I Were Whoopi Goldberg" Williams*
- *Don Johnson*
- *Barbra Streisand*
- *David Corn*
- *Robert Scheer*
- *Mark Green*
- *Leslie Stahl*
- *Katharine Graham*
- *All college presidents* except John Silber and George Roche

"Shocked to find the following names missing from the New Enemies List," says Lawrence D. Skutch of Westport, Connecticut:

- *John Dingell* (D-MI), whose recent pronouncements on scientific method make this country appear "a buffoon among great nations"
- *Bill Bradley* (D-NJ), who pulled strings to join a reserve unit during Vietnam so he could continue his important work—playing basketball
- *Sam Nunn* (D-GA), whose only useful action is to prove a Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is unfit to be Secretary of Defense
- *Johnny Carson,* whose only funny line in almost thirty years was that Jim Wright would resign as Speaker as soon as he could find a buyer for the office
- *Jay Leno,* who thinks the mere mention of J. Danforth Quayle should regale the assorted hinds with laughter
- *Edward Kennedy* (D-MA), who, while enjoying the fruits of a $400 million trust fund, can't spend the rest of the country's money fast enough
- *Tip O'Neill*

James A. Morgan of Martinsburg, West Virginia, proposes:

- *Jane Fonda*
- *Molly Yard*
- *Barbara Ehrenreich*
- *Kate Michelman*
- *And my peacenik friends George and Linda from Pittsburgh* whom I suspect would secretly *love* to be on a right-wing enemies list

Terry Przybylski of Des Plaines, Illinois, says of his dishonor roll, "This is all I have time for right now. I must return to witch-hunting, commie-bashing, and improving my techniques for gambling at bowling":

- *Michigan Governor James Blanchard*
- *Michigan Lt. Governor Martha "ERA or Bust" Griffiths*
- *Detroit Mayor Coleman Young,* Father of his City
- *Sen. Alan Dixon* (D-IL)
- *Illinois Governor James Thompson,* a donkey in elephant's clothing if ever there was one
- *Jesse Jackson, his wife, his kids, his neighbors, anyone who ever voted for him and anyone who ever trained a camera on him*
- *Lyndon LaRouche,* so the lefties in the media will quit calling him an "arch-conservative"
- *Bella Abzug*
- USA Today
- *Vernon Jarrett,* race-baiting columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*
- *The "Tempo Woman" section of the Chicago Tribune,* presented every Sunday by the Women's International Conspiracy from Hell
- *Betty Friedan*
- *Kate Millet*
- *Susan Brownmiller*
- *Margaret Atwood*
- *Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago*
- *Archbishop Weakland of Milwaukee*
- *Any priest, minister, or rabbi who was in the seminary or divinity school during the Vietnam war,* to be defrocked by one of his peers who was *there*
- *NOW*
- *NAACP*
- *ADA*
- *Greenpeace*
- *AARP,* since we can't get Claude Pepper anymore
- *ACLU*
- *UAW:* Sorry, *TAS,* sometimes you have to offend your advertisers
- *Ann Arbor, Michigan*
- *Madison, Wisconsin*
- *Iowa City, Iowa*
- *Marvin Miller, the former head of the basketball player's union,* for calling American academia a "right-wing" institution

Bryan R. Johnson of Blacksburg, Virginia, says, "If it is later discovered that an innocent person has been placed on the list, we can do what the Soviets do—rehabilitate their names about fifty years after they're dead." And he nominates:

- *The American Library Association*
- *Jack Anderson*
- *Handgun Control, Inc.*
- *Carl Rowan, Jr.*
- *The entire cast, producers, writers, and, what the hell, even the cameramen of the Today Show:* Let's bring back the concept of "guilt by association."
- *The geek who does the "SNL News" on Saturday Night Live*

Bill Wiltman of Dade City, Florida, submits:

- *Anybody who thinks Mahler was a great composer*
- *The progeny of Henry Ford and R. J. Reynolds*
- *Howard Cosell*

"Also," says Bill, "I suggest developing a schedule of traits common to all members of The List. For example, going 'Humph!' and rolling the eyes when someone mentions Nixon. Or saying 'Oh, God!' at the mention of Reagan. Or clapping at movies, considering the dead ducks in Alaska 'a crime against humanity,' and saying 'Oh, God! You read *that*?' about *TAS*. Such a list is needed because we are all susceptible to frauds now and then, even the best fraud detectives. Mencken voted for Roosevelt in '32."

"The following," writes Robert Y. Stair of Ocala, Florida, "are creatures who display no redeeming characteristics":

- *Daniel Schorr*
- *Ramsey Clark*
- *Stansfield Turner*
- *Ernest Hollings*
- *Tom Brokaw*
- *Redneck TV evangelists*
- *The Department of Education*
- *All the Pentagon desk jockeys who collected medals for the Grenada invasion but never left town*

Comes now Mary Frances Vollmer of Colorado Springs, Colorado, whose enemies include a number of my friends and acquaintances starting with Pat Schroeder, who, as I mentioned, will not be mentioned. Here, however, is the rest of the Vollmer Index:

- *Sen. Alan Cranston* (D-CA)
- *Eleanor Holmes Norton*
- *Garrick Utley*
- *Jack Germond*
- *Haynes Johnson*
- *Michael Kinsley*
- *Chris Matthews*
- *Eleanor Clift*
- *Michael Jackson,* the radio talk show host, not the singer
- *Steve Roberts* (*N.Y. Times*)
- *Chris Wallace*
- *Rep. Tom Downey* (D-NY)
- *Mark Shields*
- *Tom Braden*
- *Jack Nelson* (*L.A. Times*)

Let me beg to differ on Garrick Utley, Mary Frances. He's always been good about plugging my books, and there are some things more important than politics—car payments, just for instance. Michael Kinsley—a close friend of mine and a dear enemy of R. Emmett's—is liberalish, true, but the thing he likes best about liberalism is being

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accused of it. Then there's Chris Matthews. What can I say, Chris? I'll try to make sure you're well treated in detention.

William Milton Macfadyen of Santa Barbara, California, sends us a neatly typed, inclusive, and alphabetized syllabus. He's obviously been keeping a file on these people. Stick around, Mac, we're going to need you during the Quayle Administration:

ABA
The Hon. James A. Baker III
The Rev. Jim Bakker
Bob Beckel
The Hon. Joe Biden
The Hon. Harry A. Blackmun
The Miserable Jack Brooks
The Hon. Willie Brown
California's Democratic congressional delegation
Cesar Chavez
The Dishonorable Tony Coelho
EarthFirst! PeopleLast?
Michael G. Gartner
Jessica Hahn
The Hon. Lee A. Hamilton
Gary Hartpence or Gephardt or whatever his name is
Stephen Hess
Joan Kroc
Spuds MacKenzie
MADD
Ralph Neas
The New York Times
Timesmen and Timeswomen Linda Greenhouse, Lindsey Gruson, Stephen Kinzer, and Robin Toner
Planned Parenthood
Harvey Rosenfield
Eleanor Smeal
Mitch Snyder
The Hon. Arlen Specter
David Stockman
Robert Strauss
Laurence Tribe
The Unitarian Society
West Germany, Don't they ever learn?
Brian "Shorty" Willson

John F. Curran of River Edge, New Jersey, gives us the following excellent suggestions:

Little kids who become penpals of totalitarians and the media who suck this stuff up
Jim Wright, who did not so much resign from Congress as permit Congress to withdraw from him
Sweden
Pete Hamill, for finding a parallel between the Chicago '68 punks and the students in Tiananmen Square
Anyone who refers to the handicapped as "differently abled": I suppose the dead are "differently vital"
Richard Serra and his annoyingly intrusive "Tilted Arc" sculpture
The ideologically-correct pronunciation masters: Nicaragua, in English, is "knicker-rog-wa." And what's this "Chee-lay" stuff? I wonder how these people pronounce "France"?
Geraldine Ferraro and family
All bemoaners of "insensitivity"
All "nuclear-free zones"
The perpetrators of the hyphenated last name syndrome
Feminists who insist upon ragging patriarchy by retaining, upon marriage, their daddies' names
J. F. Kennedy, Jr.
Lawyers: the antichrist will have a law degree, of this I am certain

Tom Lauria of Arlington, Virginia, notes that our first article "overlooked some major, A-list Comsymp Redheads. But, hey," he continues, "now that the Right has its own 'Names Project'. . .":

Those scarlet-beaked birdbrains at National Public Radio, especially the staff of "All Things Considered"
Cat Stevens
Darryl Hannah
Bob Barker
Flora Lewis
Joan Baez
And that true red tool, City Paper editor Jack Shafer

Just a minute here, Tom, Jack Shafer isn't a "red tool," he's a Libertarian—similar to a conservative except he believes we should all have private Polaris missiles in our backyard pools. As for Darryl Hannah, you may be right about her politics, but I'm sure somebody can talk some sense into her. I volunteer.

James J. Griffitts protests my plan for media overexposure. He thinks some people should be banned from TV entirely:

Old Nixon, Johnson, and Carter experts who hover in covens along the Potomac
Robert MacNamara
CIA's Colby: an obvious security risk

Griffitts also suggests that subcommittees made up of blacks, Episcopalians, Jews, journalists, and Republicans should be set up to select numbers of their own to be banished from the media, e.g.:

Andrew Young
Barbara Jordan
William Sloane Coffin
Desmond Tutu
Headman Browning
Alan Dershowitz
Rep. Solarz
Charlane Hunter-Gault
Geraldo Rivera
Hodding Carter III
Lowell Weicker
Paul Sarbanes
And maybe Richard Nixon

Richard Nixon? You've gone too far, James. We'll have to make one more addition to the Enemies List here and now:

James J. Griffitts

Marion E. Mahony of Roanoke, Virginia, forwards a list "compiled with much phlegm, bile and—and barf!!!":

Governor Baliles of VA
Lt. Gov. Douglas Wilder of VA
Gov. Mario Cuomo of NY
Sen. Chuck Robb of VA
Ex-Sen. Paul Trible (R-VA), quitter and turncoat!
Numerous Roman Catholic bishops, clergy and dissident nuns: I am a Roman Catholic—but am no Leftist or libertarian
Columnist William Raspberry, an ordinarily sensible man who supports Jesse Jackson for PRESIDENT!!!
Louis Farrakhan
Paxton Davis, a radical leftist columnist in our local paper
PLOWSHARES
Justices Brennan, Marshall, and Blackmun, stubborn ole' misfits
Armand Hammer
Gloria Steinem
Larry Flynt
Hugh and Christine Hefner
Paul Newman: He's beautiful and talented and I love him—but I HATE HIS POLITICS!!!

Well put, Marion, but Gloria Steinem is from my home town of Toledo, Ohio, and, believe me, she's got a reason to be crazy.

Jeff Kock and Ken Pitts of Nashville, Tennessee, say:

Mary McGrory

and add, "We propose legislation mandating that all newspapers carrying both Doonesbury and Miss McGrory's column drop Doonesbury and put Mary's dribble on the comics page."

Marjorie G. James of Austin, Texas, tells us, "I get a lot of mail from celebrities, and they want to hear from me, too. In fact they even send me addressed envelopes, and sometimes postage. So—please":

Joanne Woodward, who wants to keep back-alley abortionists at bay
Jimmy Carter, who wants to keep on hammering
Lily Tomlin, who wants to help make Ann Richards governor of Texas
Ann Richards
Ann Lewis

Plus:

Massachusetts
New York City
Dan Rather
Walter Cronkite
Cathy Cronkite: Walter's daughter who has a radio talk show here and gets downright testy with callers who show just a speck of good sense

Dr. Alfred M. Beyer of Garden City, New York, would like to add:

National Geographic

"This may raise some eyebrows," says Dr. Al, "but I have long considered it a left-leaning mag. Every 2-3 months they show us a 'People's Republic' country with smiling peasants and citizens."

And, right on cue, in the August issue of *NG*, is a gushing piece, "The Many Lives of Old Havana."

Steve J. Adamek of San Diego, California, calls us timid. "The nation requires a complete perestroika," he claims. "We must say *bon voyage* to":

Ex-gang members and ex-drug addicts who have become drug counselors and youth activists

"This will open the job market for current addicts and gang members. Thus we will be left with only one problem, the sagging domestic assault rifle industry. This can be solved by the time-honored trade practice of government subsidized dumping. The outskirts of Nicaragua and the interior of China seem good places to test this policy."

Mark Sheffield, Jr. of Escondido, California, decries:

Paul Duke
Frederick Allen
Cokie Roberts
Judy Woodruff
Cher
Sally Quinn
William Hurt
Maxine Waters
MacNeil-Lehrer and company
Rep. Don Edwards (D-CA)
Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)

Dave Wilson of Denver, Colorado, recommends for animadversion:

Helen Caldicott
Sam Donaldson
John Chancellor: He actually suggested in a commentary that the U.S. government subsidize an American book tour by Salman Rushdie.
The Massachusetts congressional delegation: Send in the clowns
Rep. James Traficant, Jr. (D-OH)
Actor John Cusack: He claims that because of his anti-Reagan statements, a government agent is probably monitoring his phone calls—talk about a lousy civil service job.
Elayne Boosler: The comedy club answer to Mme. Defarge although Defarge was better at keeping people in stitches.
Dayton, Ohio: Hometown of the acting Lowe brothers, Rob and Chad. What a comedown from being the hometown of the flying Wright brothers, Orville and Wilber.
Larry King: He hangs up on callers who disagree with him within eight seconds.
Callers who agree with Larry King: He hangs up on them within twelve seconds.

Personally, Dave, I think Larry King redeems himself for the former by the latter. Besides, he once gave me an even better book plug than Garrick Utley.

James R. Stevenson, address unknown, reproves:

George Steinbrenner: Anyone who can destroy baseball so thoroughly has got to be a Pinko.
C. Everett Koop
E.T. Is anybody on this list truly human?
The American Roman Catholic Bishops: Heretics all!
David Rockefeller: Hey, this is an enemies list! It has to have a Rockefeller. Otherwise, we'll give paranoia a bad name.

And James signs his letter with a rather strict "OFF THE PINKS!"

• • •

That's as fine a sentiment as any with which to close the list for this month. But list-keeper O'Rourke will be back next issue with dozens—scores, hundreds!—more names to complete the list. —*Ed.*

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Charlotte Low Allen

THE MYSTERIES OF RU-486

The abortion pill is caught in the government's regulatory machinery, but population-control groups and feminists are increasing their efforts to shake it loose. Why do they want to make women the guinea pigs for a product which medical science knows almost nothing about?

Now that the Supreme Court has decided to allow states to restrict abortion substantially at hospitals and medical clinics, interest among members of the women's movement has rekindled in do-it-yourself abortion, a fad of the early 1970s bra-burning days that fell into disuse. The home remedies range from cocaine (it can induce uterine contractions) to something called "menstrual extraction," which involves a syringe, plastic fishtank tubing, and a Mason jar. These methods, although touted by feminist health clinics, are generally considered dangerous, certainly for the mother, but also for any baby who survives them to birth. "Sadly, many home remedies could damage a fetus instead of kill it," was *Newsweek* magazine's rather odd comment on the subject.

Invariably into this discussion of ways of completely privatizing abortion—thus removing it from the purview of the law and the right-to-life movement—comes the abortion pill, RU-486. That pill, as this article will explain, is far from a do-it-yourself abortion fix, but there are many optimistic souls who would like to think it is.

RU-486 is an anti-progesterone steroid that destroys the uterine lining, at least in most cases, starving out the already attached fetus, which dies and is expelled. In the year since the pill, whose trade name is Mifepristone, went on the French market, the National Organization for Women and its offshoot, former NOW president Eleanor Smeal's Fund for a Feminist Majority (FFM), have been leading a campaign to find a U.S. pharmaceutical company willing to take on the U.S. marketing of the pill.

The NOW/FFM coalition is one wheel of a strange troika whose other wheels are the Population Council and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. They seem determined to push RU-486 through, with the goal of speeding FDA review to four years (by using European tests in lieu of American ones), limiting damage exposure for any private company that decides to make the drug, and even using federal funds to pay the research and marketing costs.

RU-486 is currently the sole property of its French developer, Roussel-Uclaf, a joint subsidiary of the German pharmaceutical company Hoechst and the French government. Invented in 1982, the pill has been on the market in France since September 1988; 12,000 French women are said to have used it so far. China also had a brief licensing arrangement with Roussel to use RU-486 as part of its one-child-per-couple population-halving program but has reportedly terminated the arrangement. Because China does not recognize international copyright or patent conventions, it is difficult to say with certainty whether some black-market version of the pill is currently circulating in that country and perhaps outside its borders.

Meanwhile, no U.S. pharmaceutical company to date has shown the slightest interest in manufacturing or marketing it. Part of the reason for the drug industry's cold feet is probably fear of a massive boycott by the right-to-life movement of all the drug company's other products. In 1985, the National Right to Life Committee was instrumental in Upjohn Co.'s decision to stop making its labor-inducing prostaglandin (another extremely painful abortifacient) and to disband its entire fertility research division.

But the main reason for the hesitancy on RU-486 is undoubtedly fear of liability exposure. No company wants to see its product go the lawsuit-dotted way of the first generation of birth control pills (millions of dollars in damage awards, including $2.75 million in punitive damages against the Ortho Pharmaceutical Corp. alone) or, even worse, the Dalkon Shield, whose $2.5 billion in punitive assessments, with another $12 billion possibly to come, forced the manufacturer, A. H. Robins Co., into bankruptcy court (a payout plan was recently approved).

From a reading of the somewhat scant English-language medical literature on RU-486—articles in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Lancet*, and the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*—the abortion pill emerges as one of the creepiest human concoctions around. And not only because it kills the unborn, a job at which it is actually not outstandingly efficient, zapping only about 50 to 85 percent of them depending on which study you read (prostaglandin, taken in conjunction with the pill, boosts the rate to 95 percent). By contrast, surgical abortion is 99 percent effective.

Abortion via the pill is an ordeal for the women involved, far more of an ordeal than conventional surgical abortion. It is time-consuming (the abortion part alone lasts three days, and the clinical part comprises a week's worth of visits), bloody (one woman in a Swedish trial required a transfusion, although for most it resembles an exceedingly heavy menstrual period, with bleeding lasting on average from six to sixteen days, occasionally up to thirty), and painful (many women require analgesic shots to ease them through). Nausea and vomiting are other common side effects: so, in some women,

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for reasons no one can figure out, are itching and burning sensations around the vagina.

In the seven years since Dr. Etienne-Emile Baulieu, the French physician who developed the RU-486 molecule for Roussel, announced his invention, the drug has gone through several violent transmogrifications of description, leading one to wonder just how much anyone really knows about it. At first, it was supposed to be the long-desired "morning after" pill, preventing the fertilized egg from implanting itself on to the uterine wall as normally happens a week after conception. Then the Roussel researchers discovered the drug did not work immediately after conception. So it was next touted as a kind of menstrual regulator, a drug a woman could take every month and not even know if she was aborting, presumably easing her conscience. Then they found that it quickly causes a phenomenon called "dysynchrony," in which a woman's ovulatory and menstrual cycles become unlinked, reducing the drug's effectiveness in terminating any pregnancy.

In 1987 Baulieu bragged that RU-486 would completely replace surgical abortions up through the first ten weeks of pregnancy, which is when 80 percent of abortions take place. It turns out that the drug does not work very well after the seventh week. Indeed, timing is of the essence with RU-486. It is most effective taken about a week after a woman misses her menstrual period up through that seventh week, when it is markedly less effective. That is typically about a three-week window. So far, all the studies have concluded that RU-486 is "safe." But "safe," in the definition of Marie Bass of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, means "there's been no evidence so far of mortality." That is, no woman has yet died from taking the pill.

No one has researched the long-term effects of RU-486 on a woman's health or fertility. The drug seems to suppress ovulation for three to seven months after it is taken. Some women clearly have no trouble eventually conceiving again: the studies have reported repeaters in their programs. But there are no scientific data on this question. Rather ominously, rabbit studies reveal that RU-486 can cause birth defects, *Lancet* reported in 1987. The drug's molecular structure resembles that of DES, the 1950s anti-miscarriage drug that, by altering the fetus's DNA, tended to cause cervical cancer in the daughters of the women who took it. All the published studies strictly warn that women on whom the drug proves ineffective cannot change their minds but must undergo a surgical abortion. Birth defects, a sure source of lawsuits, are one reason the U.S. pharmaceutical industry is steering clear of RU-486.

One might well ask: Why bother with this drug at all? Some abortion advocates have been asking themselves this very question. RU-486 "probably represents a technical advance in an area where none is needed, or at least not very much," said Dr. Phillip G. Stubblefield, president of the National Abortion Federation, at a reproductive health conference in 1986. Many physicians have expressed concern over the heavy bleeding, which occurs even if the drug fails to induce an abortion. It typically takes from eight to ten years to obtain the federal Food and Drug Administration's approval for a new drug (stages of animal and human studies plus layers of review), and the cost of testing and marketing a new drug can range from $30 million to $70 million. Some have suggested it may be prohibitive for a private company even to obtain the necessary insurance to perform the clinical tests.

The Health and Human Services Department currently forbids the National Institutes of Health from funding abortion research as part of its $8 million contraceptive program. But the Population Council, a 37-year-old, $20 million nonprofit organization that has the backing of the Rockefeller and Mellon foundations and currently subsidizes most U.S. research on contraceptives, has recently been paying for U.S. studies of RU-486 on a Roussel license, including a series at the University of Southern California's medical school. NOW is trying to browbeat the pharmaceutical industry into getting involved. (Its scare-tactic prediction: the pill "will be available in the U.S., either legally or illegally, in no more than 2-5 years.") Planned Parenthood lobbied heavily last year in hopes of defeating an amendment that would have exempted abortifacients from a products-liability reform bill in Congress.

Following the feminist and population-control lead has been a generally bovine press. News stories about RU-486 continue to call it a "morning-after" pill, although many mornings must pass before it is effective. A June 1988 article in *Mother Jones* magazine is typical of the general level of media ignorance. "For a woman whose period is late, using RU-486 means no waiting, no walking past picket lines at abortion clinics, and no feet up in stirrups for surgery," burbles health writer Laura Fraser. "It also means she will never have to know whether she had actually been pregnant." Wrong on all counts, Miss Fraser. Although Baulieu, with typical hyperbole, has boasted that the pill will soon be available over the

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counter in drugstores for home dosing, it is being administered in France only under strict hospital-like supervision in the presence of a doctor. (Roussel reportedly has every pill marked and accounted for to make sure none slips into the black market.)

Thus, a woman who used RU-486 to have an abortion would have to make three trips to the clinic past those picket lines: an initial visit for medical screening (anemics and those with previous pregnancy problems are eliminated) and to take the pill, a second trip forty-eight hours later for the prostaglandin, administered either via injection or vaginal suppository, and a third trip a week later to make sure she has completely aborted. Furthermore, because timing is so critical with RU-486, she will learn, via a pelvic examination (feet in stirrups) and ultrasound, not only that she is pregnant, but just how pregnant she is. No doctor who fears malpractice liability would likely expose a non-pregnant patient to the risk of hemorrhaging. Many women may even see the dead fetus they have expelled, a sight the surgical-abortion industry typically spares them. At seven weeks, a fetus is about three-fourths of an inch long and recognizably human.

Some members of the health profession have expressed reservations about the abortion pill, most notably Sue Halpern, a researcher at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, in an April 1987 article in *Ms.* magazine. But anyone outside scholarly circles who dares dissent from the RU-486 brouhaha can expect perfunctory dismissal as a right-to-life hysteric.

Much of NOW/FFM literature repeats claims for RU-486 that the medical profession has already dropped. For example, one press release still calls it a "menses inducer." Another NOW assertion is that "chemical abortion entails even less risk than a vacuum aspiration abortion," the suction procedure that is the most common form of surgical abortion in the United States. How's that again? Pro-choice advocates have always insisted that surgical abortion itself is virtually risk-free, even safer than childbirth, and it certainly takes less time than the pill, and without the side effects. Is surgical abortion actually riskier than anyone has let on?

It turns out that NOW is comparing apples and oranges: the risks of *legal*, rigidly supervised administration of RU-486 in the West to the risks of *illegal*, putatively unsupervised surgical abortions in Third World countries where sanitation standards are not high. But what if RU-486 started to circulate illegally—or even legally—in those Third World countries, where there are not enough doctors to supervise every dose and patients may not be sophisticated enough to return for the crucial follow-up visits? "The woman does need to have access to a health clinic," admits Bass of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project.

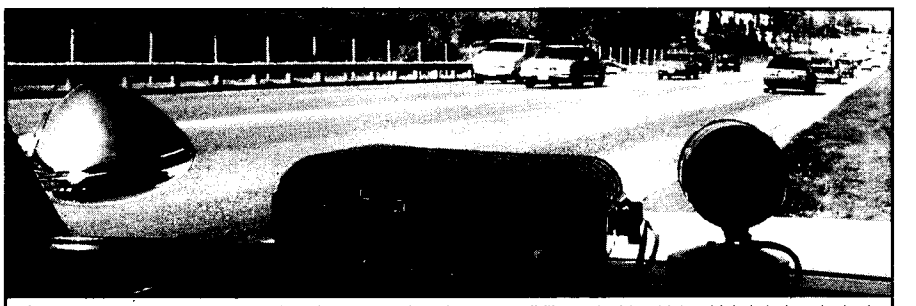
From a reading of the scant English-language medical literature, the abortion pill emerges as one of the creepiest human concoctions around.

The heavy NOW/FFM drum-beating for RU-486 has created a double bind for the 10,000-member National Women's Health Network, which does not want to be seen as anti-abortion or aligned with the right-to-lifers but has serious qualms about introducing reproductive products onto the market without adequate testing. Just by way of contrast to RU-486, another Population Council product, the new Norplant contraceptive—a set of hormone-releasing capsules to be injected into a woman's arm and designed to last five years—has been in the works for twenty years and still does not have final FDA approval. "Women know the contraceptive revolution has been influenced more by the pursuit of population control and profit than by the need for safe birth control," wrote Sybil Shainwald, a past president of the Network, in a recent issue of *USA Today*. The Network is taking a schizophrenic line on the abortion pill. "It's a complicated issue," says executive director Victoria Leonard. "Certainly the Network would think it appropriate that there's more extensive testing and that it be followed closely to watch for abuses in medically under-served communities."

The search for "better" contraceptives and "better" abortifacients is at bottom an effort to neutralize via technology the blind, brute hand of Mother Nature, who drives male and female inexorably together to couple and to reproduce the species. It is the force that through the green fuse drives the flower: trying to stop the process is like trying to stop a tulip bulb from sprouting. Stopping the reproductive process (or "controlling fertility," to borrow the phrase *du jour* of the women's movement) is unimaginably hard, yet we want to believe that science will someday, somehow make it easy, like waving a fairy godmother's wand. The egg and sperm will never meet: the pregnant woman will magically become un-pregnant by swallowing a pill.

All chemical methods of fertility control are designed to interfere in some fashion with the complex hormonal process of the female reproductive system, producing the estrogen that releases the egg for fertilization and the progesterone that stimulates the building of the uterine lining and the nourishment of the fetus for its first eight weeks. The early birth control pills were heavy serial mixes of synthetic estrogen and progesterone designed to mimic pregnancy, fooling the pituitary gland into stopping egg production. The newer generation of pills contain little synthetic estrogen and low levels of progestin, blocking implantation but not ovulation. IUDs are also likely implantation-blockers (although there is some evidence they simply "dissuade" the sperm from swimming up the fallopian tube to meet the egg), and the newer IUDs release progestin as well.

The early histories of the two biggest fertility-control disasters, the first-generation birth control pills and the Dalkon Shield, bear a striking resemblance to the story so far of RU-486. Indeed, someone who wishes to predict a possible scenario for the abortion pill might do well to read such books as Paul Vaughan's *The Pill on Trial*, Morton Mintz's *At Any Cost: Corporate Greed, Women and the Dalkon Shield*, and *Nightmare: Women and the Dalkon Shield* by Susan Perry and Jim



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Why radar makes mistakes. How to protect yourself.

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How radar works

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The best guess

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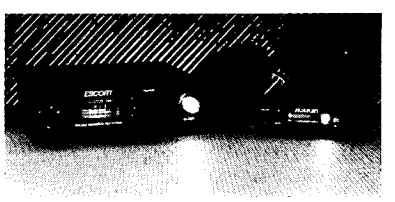
The truth is, in many cases he can't be sure. The result? You can be ticketed for somebody else's reflection.

The only way to defend yourself against these wrongful tickets is to know when radar is operating near you.



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Dawson. As with RU-486, the Population Council was a major player, heavily promoting both the birth control pill (Planned Parenthood funded the research) and the IUD. It convened the First International Conference on Intra-uterine Contraception in 1962.

The intense promotion of the Pill and IUD by the population-control industry came in the face of overwhelming evidence of unpleasant side effects for both. All tests of the Pill uncovered a laundry list of them: weight gain, depression, anemia, thrombosis, jaundice, nausea, skin disorders, and migraine headaches were only a few. Experimental IUDs tested from the 1920s to the '50s engendered persistent reports of pain, bleeding, infection, and sterility (all had silk tails that tended to "wick" bacteria into the womb, a failing of the multi-filamented Dalkon Shield tail).

Enthusiasts for both contraceptives pooh-poohed the reported side effects as female hysteria. With the Pill, it was predicted that unpleasant symptoms would taper off as women's bodies got used to being perpetually synthetically pregnant. The FDA approved the first pill, Enovid, in 1960, after only about four years of testing, mostly on Puerto Rican slum women.

Under the law as it then existed, IUDs as medical "devices," not "drugs," did not require any testing before marketing. At the Population Council's IUD conference in 1962, the individual complaints of women played second fiddle to the general goal of defusing what was viewed as the incipient worldwide population explosion (it was the decade of Paul Ehrlich's book *The Population Bomb*). "Perhaps the individual patient is expendable in the general scheme of things, particularly if the infection she acquires is sterilizing but not lethal," one expert declared. "You have to realize that the population movement has an ideological bent, and that, as far as science is concerned, it's not just concerned with finding out the truth," says Mintz, a former *Washington Post* health reporter. Poor women—Baltimore blacks who visited inventor Hugh Davis's clinic at Johns Hopkins University's medical school—were the Shield's test subjects.

Anyone outside scholarly circles who dares dissent from the RU-486 brouhaha can expect perfunctory dismissal as a right-to-life hysteric.

Accompanying the release of both kinds of products was a Sexual Revolution-fueled euphoria that created intense public demand. Each kind of contraceptive seemed to hold itself out as the fairy godmother's touch that would painlessly sever the pesky link between sexual delight and procreation. Pill fever was the hallmark of my own college years during the 1960s. In my dormitory, girls ostentatiously flashed their plastic Pill packets and condescendingly touted its virtues to *naives* still using the diaphragm. Even girls who did not have boyfriends got Pill prescriptions. One friend of mine was a virgin for four of the seven straight years she was on the Pill. The IUD engendered a similar fad a few years later, although most women I knew had their IUDs removed after a short time because of the pain and heavy menstrual bleeding they seemed to cause. From 1960 through 1970, 20 million women took the Pill. By 1980, 60 million women worldwide had tried IUDs.

The first-generation Pills got pulled from the market amid a flood of lawsuits linking it with thrombo-emboli-sms: blood clots in the veins that are fatal if they reach the heart. A 1969 study by the FDA showed that women were 4.4 times as likely to have the embolisms if they used the Pill. Other studies linked the early oral contraceptives with cancer. About 13 million women currently use second-generation Pills, although smokers and women over thirty-five are not supposed to take them. At last report, those Pills, too, have been linked to breast cancer, but the FDA has decided no extra warnings are necessary.

About 4.5 million Dalkon Shields were distributed in eighty countries during the 1970s, about 2.9 million of them in the United States, before thousands of women started reporting pregnancies and miscarriages, uterine wall perforations, and infection-induced sterility. As many as 90,000 wearers may have been injured. In 1976, Congress amended the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to require premarket testing of medical devices such as contraceptives. Currently there are only two IUDs in distribution, both manufactured by small, low-exposure companies and recommended for women in monogamous relationships whose risk for pelvic inflammatory disease is low.

What all of this bodes for RU-486 is uncertain. At the behest of pro-choice members of Congress, a four-year reauthorization bill for Title X federal family-planning assistance now contains a $10 million grant for "development, evaluation and bringing to the marketplace of new and improved contraceptive devices, drugs and methods." If this passes—a Senate version has already been cleared for a floor vote—it would put the federal government into the contraceptive marketing business for the first time. It also could put the government into the RU-486 business, which would please feminists dismayed at what they view as pusillanimity in the private-sector drug industry. On July 23, Congresswomen Patricia Schroeder and Olympia Snowe introduced a $77 million "birth-control research" bill that is drafted broadly enough to include abortifacient research.

We do not know whether RU-486 will be as disastrous as some of the earlier fertility control methods released to unblinking, uncritical cheers from educated people who should have known better. We will not know until a first generation of female guinea pigs—all of whom will be more than happy to volunteer for the job—has put the abortion pill through the clinical test of time.

One of the fascinating aspects of the RU-486 controversy, and also of the recent abortion-rights protests centered on the Supreme Court's recent ruling in *Webster* v. *Reproductive Health Services Inc.*, is how the women's movement has lately turned into strictly an abortion movement. The much-touted April 9 march in Washington was originally supposed to consolidate support for a variety of issues that are considered to be of central importance to women, including parental leave, government funding for child care, equal pay for work of "comparable" worth so that single mothers can earn family wages, and forcing errant fathers to support their offspring. All these issues (perhaps paradoxically, revolving around women's role as mothers, not as trailblazers of sexual liberation) fell by the wayside as the march became focused on abortion alone. A similar abortion-rights march is scheduled for November 12.

The National Organization for Women is now almost entirely an abortion-rights organization: its nonprofit litigation arm devotes itself to eliminating abortion restrictions and neutralizing abortion protesters. In late July, at the organization's annual convention in Cincinnati, NOW delegates voted to demand that the U.S. government test and distribute RU-486 and even to consider forming a new abortion-oriented political party. The ideological eggs of the feminists are going into one basket. In the long run, the women's rights advocates may discover they have been used simply to serve the goal of the population control enthusiasts—cutting the birth rate by any means possible. It is a goal in which, as that Population Council expert declared twenty-seven years ago, the scientific truth is subservient to ideology and the individual female patient is expendable. □

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SPECIAL REPORT

Michael Fumento

THE ASBESTOS RIP-OFF

Coming soon to a school or office near you: a life-saving innovation that could kill you, designed to correct a problem that doesn't exist, by removing materials that aren't dangerous until somebody tries to remove them. And guess who's going to pay for it.

For the school board of San Francisco, and the students of McAteer High School, it was the problem that wouldn't die. In the early eighties, after a routine check, the school was discovered to be virtually saturated in asbestos: every ceiling, pipe, and beam had been coated when the building was constructed in 1973 to provide insulation and fire protection. After acting to minimize the disruption in school activities—the students were to be transferred to another school during the asbestos removal, which in any case was to take place mostly in the summer months—the board authorized $10 million to clear McAteer of asbestos.

A year later, however, the students were still at the other school. The cost of the removal had risen to more than $11 million. To make up for the projected overruns, the board tried to sell a parcel of land for $5 million. The attempt failed. By the time the students were allowed to return to McAteer, they had spent three semesters at the other school. Total costs, including some repairs unrelated to asbestos, stood at $18 million—the equivalent of the annual salaries for 217 of San Francisco's (highly paid) teachers.

It gets worse: the entire asbestos removal, it now appears, was unnecessary. Or so the superintendent of San Francisco's school board now believes, with considerable justification. Two recent reports, along with a slew of earlier ones, indicate that the students at McAteer High were probably in no danger from asbestos exposure and never would be. Instead, they—and the school board and the taxpayers of the city of San Francisco—were victims of what could end up as one of the biggest regulatory boondoggles in American history. In the end, its costs may well run into the hundreds of billions of dollars; more disastrously, it could cause more deaths than it prevents.

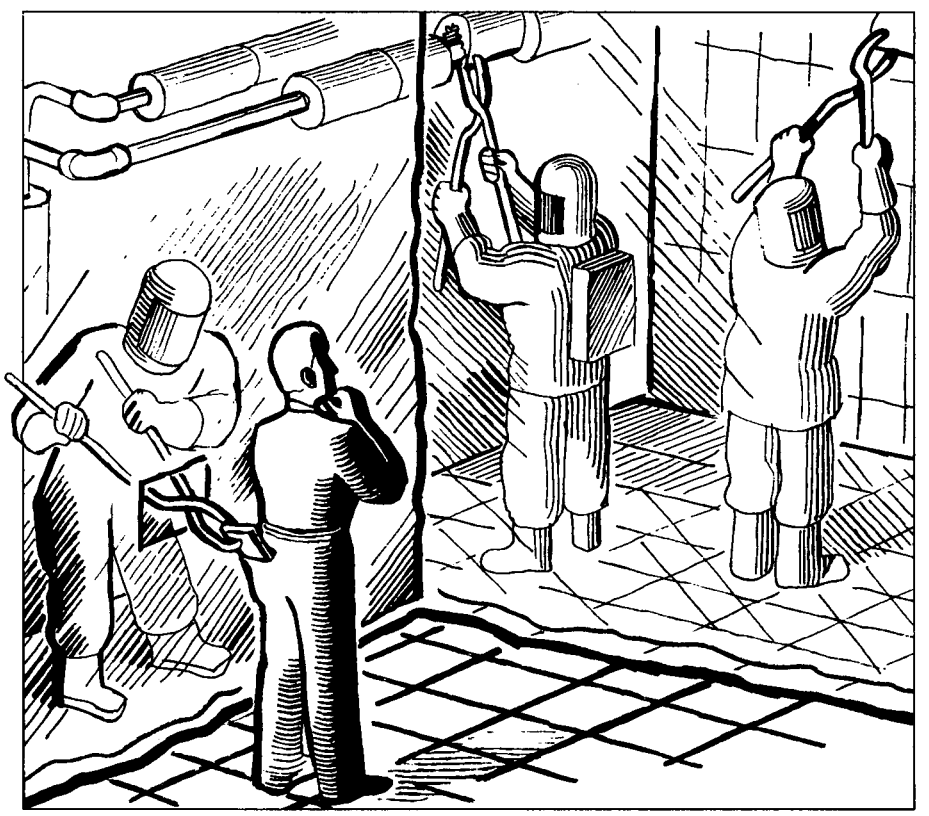
Michael Fumento is author of The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS, *to be published by New Republic Books (an imprint of Basic Books).*

AHERA Today, Gone Tomorrow

While fear of asbestos contamination in buildings is a fairly recent development, use of the fibrous mineral dates back to ancient times. Romans used napkins of woven asbestos, which were dry-cleaned by being tossed in the fire. Asbestos outerwear, used to withstand damage from fires, was worn at least as early as the first half of the nineteenth century. In this century, asbestos was required in the bulkheads of all American warships. Up until 1976, model building codes mandated its use in spaces where protection against fire was essential. Even now, asbestos is used in hundreds of products, ranging from vehicle brakes to sewer pipes to protective aprons and gloves.

The use of asbestos was first questioned in the 1920s, when factory workers began filing the first of thousands of lawsuits against employers, after asbestosis, an often fatal scarring of the lungs, became widely recognized. Later, in the 1960s, Dr. Irving Selikoff documented the correlation between asbestos and lung cancer and mesothelioma (a cancer of the lining of the lungs) in shipyard workers. Between these three diseases, asbestos is estimated to cause from 3,300 to 12,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, often with a lag time of thirty or more years between exposure and the development of disease.

Since the sixties, asbestos has fallen under increasing regulation. In 1986, goaded by the National Education Association, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Service Employees International Union, U.S. Public Interest Group (founded by Ralph Nader), and others, Congress passed, and President Reagan signed, the most stringent asbestos statute yet. Effective December 14, 1987, the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) ordered that every school building in the United States, whether public or private, be inspected for asbestos. Schools judged to be unsafe—an estimated 45,000 buildings—were required to draw up abatement plans by October 12, 1988, and to have begun protective action no later than July 19, 1989.



The stringency of AHERA lay not only in its sweep—there are, after all, a lot of school buildings in the United States—but also in the kinds of asbestos defined as requiring abatement. Friable asbestos-containing materials (that is, those readily crumpled by hand) that are "significantly damaged" must be abated, but so too must those that have the *potential* for "significant damage," even if they are firmly imbedded in walls, floors, and ceilings. Abatement is achieved either through encapsulization or, more often, through removal.

Asbestos was commonly used in school construction until the early 1970s. Most schools have asbestos in floor and ceiling tiles, acoustical plaster, pipe insulation, and fireproofing materials. Since asbestos makes an excellent thermal insulator, cold weather states tend to have far more of it in their schools and other buildings. Although there are several varieties of asbestos found in different regions around the world, chrysotile or "white" asbestos, mined in Quebec, is generally considered to be the most benign type, since the length of its fibers makes it conducive to being washed out by the lungs. Significantly, over 95 percent of the asbestos used in the U.S. is chrysotile.

Panic in the Malls

The cost of removing asbestos is nothing short of staggering. Sprayed on for about 25 cents a foot in the 1960s, it can now cost $25 or more a foot to remove (up to $50 in New York City), owing to the safety precautions that must be taken to protect the re-

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mover and occupants of the building. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, which is responsible for enforcing AHERA, the cleanup of the 45,000 schools under the act will cost taxpayers an estimated $3.1 billion over a three-year period—an amount equal to the average annual salaries of 110,000 teachers.

In fact, that figure is almost certainly too low. A report in *American School and University* magazine stated that although EPA was estimating costs of $6,500 to $6,900 per school building for inspection and development of the removal plan, "districts should expect to pay about $20,000 per building—or more." California state auditors estimated the cost of removing asbestos hazards from that state's 7,000 affected public schools would be at least $500 million, while the California General Assembly's Office of Research estimated the cost for all schools in the state, public and private, at about $1 billion. The National School Boards Association has estimated total U.S. school abatement costs in excess of $6 billion.

So far, EPA has appropriated $202 million to aid in local school abatement programs—little more than a token amount, as mounting evidence indicates. Alabama, a warm weather state, has already spent $35 million to remove asbestos from 90 percent of its school buildings. One school district in Broward County, Florida, will pay an estimated $10 million in abatement costs. And while the NEA and others have made it a priority to obtain far greater federal funding, it is really only a matter of redistributing the tax burden. One way or another, whether through local property assessments or federal taxes, the taxpayer foots the bill. Except, of course, when the school is a private one. Private schools, unable to fund bonding measures, are suffering the most. In June, Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark, speaking to an assembly of bishops at Seton Hall University, declared: "We have to get some federal help. If we cannot . . . we will be faced with the question of the very survival of parochial schools."

The asbestos alarmists do not operate alone. AHERA was signed into law by the supposedly anti-regulation Reagan White House without so much as a hint of a veto.

Still, school abatement costs are but the tip of the iceberg. A similar program for all public and commercial buildings—which has so far been stalled in Congress and by EPA—would cost $51 billion, according to EPA. But again, the evidence is that the agency's estimates are on the low side—to say the very least. For example, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey is expecting to pay about $1 billion for the abatement of just the World Trade Center and LaGuardia Airport. (New York City law requires abatement if renovation work is being done, as it is at these buildings.) A report by the Assembly Office of Research in California said that the total cost of removing asbestos from all asbestos-containing buildings in that moderate weather state could be $20 billion.

Thus California and two complexes in New York City are slated to take up almost half of the EPA estimated total cost. According to Stephen L. Schweich, an environmental industry analyst, direct abatement costs could be around $100 billion, and other reputable estimates put the figure as high as $200 billion. Writing in the June issue of the trade magazine *Asbestos Issues*, Peter MacDowall, a widely respected industry consultant and analyst, and Ehud Mouchy, a real estate consultant, estimate total abatement costs at (Gulp!) more than $2 trillion over the next three decades, a figure which includes not only the direct cost of abatement, as the EPA's does, but lost wages due to displacement and other incidental costs.

Under the EPA's 1974 national emission standard for hazardous air pollutants, anyone who wants to tear down or renovate a building must remove the friable asbestos-containing materials first. As a consequence of this, and of the possibility of lawsuits from persons claiming asbestos exposure, prices of asbestos-containing buildings have fallen precipitously—as much as ten percent in Manhattan, with greater losses in other cities. A Japanese corporation reduced its expected offer to buy the Exxon building in Manhattan by $100 million when the buyer learned it would have to spend that much to remove asbestos from the building if it hoped to renovate. Likewise, the price of the ARCO building in Los Angeles, also sold to a Japanese firm, was reduced by as much as $50 million because of the potential cost of abating asbestos.

Yet tremendous expenses can be incurred even without selling. In 1985 a national real estate investment firm purchased a mall near Denver for $53 million, believing it to be free of asbestos. Two years later, when it decided to renovate, it found asbestos throughout the ceiling. Health officials ordered the mall shut, and the inventory of 100 stores was carted away and buried. Total costs, including the removal, lost rent, and payments to storekeepers: $17 million. Not surprisingly, then, such institutional investors as banks, pension funds, and insurance companies, fearing a tide of asbestos-related lawsuits (meritless or otherwise), are increasingly refusing to lend against or buy into asbestos-containing buildings.

A Low-fiber Diet

Yet whatever the cost, whatever the economic dislocation, the price is worth paying, we are told, because of what such caution prevents: the grisly deaths of thousands of Americans, especially schoolchildren. (The figures most commonly cited by abatement advocates, in their publications and testimony before Congress, are 15 million children along with another 1.4 million adults who work in schools.)

In fact, the issue is far from that simple. First, the EPA's standard for when abatement should take place may be useless. EPA maintains that visual inspections should be used to determine which materials need to be removed or encapsulated and which may be left alone. Air monitoring, in which air is sampled and then inspected by microscopes, is seen to be, at best, "a source of supplemental information, when conducted in conjunction with a comprehensive visual inspection."

But as Michael Gough, an asbestos specialist, has pointed out in the periodical *Issues in Science and Technology*, the EPA "has presented no information supporting the predictive value of visual clues for future conditions. . . . When it has evaluated how well inspectors' opinions correlate with measurements of *current* airborne asbestos levels, the agency has found repeated failure." In its study of federal office buildings, for example, inspectors trained to EPA visual-inspection standards found that in buildings where asbestos materials were judged to be in good repair, the median airborne concentration turned out to be 3.5 nanograms per cubic meter (or .0001 fibers per cubic centimeter). For buildings with materials judged in poor repair, the median concentration was only 0.25 nanograms per cubic meter (or less than .00001 fibers per cubic centimeter)—exactly the opposite of what the EPA's standard of measurement might have led one to expect. Gough concluded: "Although the EPA may argue that air monitoring provides information about only one point in time, visual inspections don't even do that accurately." Nevertheless, the EPA has decided that for now "the options for risk reduction do not include the setting of an acceptable level of exposure to asbestos with accompanying air monitoring."

Second, while it is incontrovertible that constant exposure to high levels of asbestos dust can cause serious medical problems often leading to death, low-level exposure is an entirely different matter. Comparing exposures of persons in asbestos occupations to those who are simply occupants in buildings with asbestos is very tenuous. Asbestos workers in the 1940s and '50s were generally exposed to concentrations from 100,000 to one million times higher

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than those which would be present in a building using asbestos insulation.

Every day we are subject to countless minerals, bacteria, and other substances such as arsenic, cyanide, and mercury which, in high enough doses, would prove fatally poisonous, yet which in low levels have no adverse effect whatsoever. The level below which no harm is caused is called a "threshold." Proponents of asbestos abatement claim there is no threshold for asbestos exposure: that is, they say that while persons inhaling smaller amounts of asbestos fiber will develop cancer at lesser rates, even the tiniest amount of exposure nevertheless causes a risk of disease. "A single asbestos fiber," one often reads in abatement literature, "can kill you."

There is no evidence for this. In adducing support for the proposition that even low-level exposure entails risk (low level being that which the occupant of an average asbestos-containing building would experience), abatement supporters invariably cite the finding that household members of workers in asbestos occupations have higher-than-average levels of lung disease. The added risk presumably comes from washing the workers' clothing or other similar contact. But handling clothing covered in asbestos over a period of decades cannot be compared to sitting in a building with asbestos built into the ceiling or wrapped around pipes in the boiler room. Further, this phenomenon of familial sickness appears consigned mostly to the regions of South Africa, where crocidolite or "blue" asbestos is mined. Blue asbestos fibers are structured such that they are generally thought to be the most dangerous of all types of asbestos—on the opposite end of the scale, in other words, from the white Canadian fibers used in almost all American asbestos products.

Still, building a case for abating asbestos around the "no safe level" argument is inherently flawed: it would be like banning automobiles or planes because no combination of safety features can make automobile or plane travel completely safe. Cars and planes are much more dangerous than anybody's estimate of the risk of low-level asbestos exposure, but they have an overriding utility, so they stay. Likewise, leaving asbestos alone has a great utility in that, as will be seen, it costs a fortune—both in dollars and in lives—to remove it.

The "single fiber" and "no threshold" assertions rest on the premise that asbestos fibers are some sort of alien substance that the body simply can't handle—like the plastic in a landfill that will stay there forever because nature is incapable of breaking it down. "Inhaled asbestos fibers," wrote *Medical Self Care* magazine, "bypass the body's respiratory defenses and settle deep in the lungs." In fact, as the Encyclopedia Britannica's *Medical and Health Annual* explains, in most instances inhaled asbestos fibers never reach the lower respiratory tract but are removed from the lung by the continuously moving mucous lining. If they get past that point, other defense systems will usually remove them or isolate them so they can do no harm.

And a good thing, too, for asbestos—far from being a microbe brought back to earth by a falling satellite or some sinister substance concocted in a Defense Department laboratory—is as natural a pollutant as carbon dioxide or house dust. It has been around longer than man. Because it occurs in rock formations, everyone is exposed to it: in the air, in water, in food. In some areas asbestos concentrations exceeding those permitted by government workplace regulations have been recorded in natural dustfall along roads. Regardless of where we work or attend school, all of us are exposed to some level of the mineral every day.

The crucial question is how much.

Because asbestos occurs naturally in rock formations, everyone is exposed to it: in the air, in water, in food.

Overload, obviously, is unacceptable: a miner or shipyard worker, breathing in large amounts of asbestos each day for decades, may have large amounts of asbestos getting past his body's defense system or even causing that system to break down. On the other hand, analyses of normal healthy adult lung tissues of persons who have not been exposed in the workplace have found that they contain millions of asbestos fibers.

Facts Are Stupid Things

A number of expert governmental bodies and scientific authorities have concluded that the risk of disease from exposure to asbestos in buildings is close to zero. Among them are Hans Weill, M.D., and Janet Hughes of Tulane University, Richard Doll and Julian Peto of Oxford University, the Ontario Royal Commission on Asbestos, and the United Kingdom Advisory Committee on Asbestos. [See box below.] Most recently, reports have appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)* and from the Harvard University Energy and Environmental Policy Center. Both indicate that the threat of low-level asbestos exposure has more to do with hype and hysteria than health.

In the June 29, 1989, *NEJM*, two researchers from the University of Vermont and Yale schools of medicine wrote that, given the extra risks of smoking and the problems of accurately classifying smokers and nonsmokers, "it remains uncertain whether any type of asbestos acting alone can cause lung cancer in nonsmokers." (It is almost universally agreed that smokers face a much greater risk of developing asbestos-related disease, on the order of fifty times higher or more.) *NEJM* also reported: "Recent epidemi-

How Great is the Risk of Low-Level Exposure to Asbestos?

Study after study and expert after expert on the risks of low-level exposure to asbestos fibers have affirmed that this risk is virtually non-existent. To name a few:

• **1985, "Effects on Health of Exposure to Asbestos,"** by Sir Richard Doll, the Oxford University researcher who is given credit for demonstrating the link between lung cancer and smoking, and University of London Professor Julian Peto, a world authority on asbestos-related cancers.

Found that in a typical asbestos-containing building, "for a working week in an office for 20 years or for 10 years or so at school, or to lower average levels for more prolonged times at home, is calculated to produce a lifetime risk of death of one in 100,000." The report stated that asbestos in buildings is responsible for "approximately one death a year" in the whole of Britain. (Great Britain is about one-fifth the size of the United States in population.)

• **1986, "Asbestos Exposure—Quantitative Assessment of Risk,"** by Dr. Hans Weill and Janet Hughes at Tulane University, in New Orleans.

Puts the risk figure for school exposure at an "upper estimate" of "an average annual rate of approximately 0.25 deaths per million exposed" as compared to, for example, 1,200 deaths per million for long-term smoking and one death per million for living two months with a cigarette smoker and inhaling second-hand smoke. For that matter, the danger of playing high school football is a good deal greater than the danger of inhaling asbestos in that same school . . . 10 deaths per million students.

• **1988, article in *Fortune* magazine, by Louis Richman citing** Dr. Robert Sawyer, a leading researcher on asbestos health effects and an occupational health advisor to the EPA and to major corporate clients.

Concluded that while maintenance workers who are exposed to asbestos and also smoke cigarettes may be especially susceptible to lung cancer, for all other office workers, "There is no epidemiological evidence that shows a health hazard. Period."

• **1986, "Asbestos and Other Natural Mineral Fibers,"** by the World Health Organization.

"In the general population, the risks of mesothelioma and lung cancer attributable to asbestos cannot be quantified reliably and are probably undetectably low."

• **1984, "Report of the Royal Commission on Matters of Health and Safety Arising from the Use of Asbestos in Ontario."**

"Even a building whose air has a fiber level up to 10 times greater than that found in typical outdoor air would create a risk of fatality that was less than one-fiftieth the risk of having a fatal automobile accident while driving to and from the building." Further, "[W]e deem the risk which asbestos poses to building occupants to be insignificant and therefore find that asbestos in building air will almost never pose a health hazard to building occupants."

• **1984, "Interim Report to the Governor," by the State of New Jersey Asbestos Policy Committee.**

Concurred with the conclusion of the Ontario Commission. *"There are no documented cases of lung cancer associated with low-level asbestos exposure over a lifetime. Risk assessment models used to determine the incidence of cancers predict very low levels."* (Emphasis in original.) "Theoretically, one asbestos fiber could cause mesothelioma, but this is very unlikely to be the case in non-occupational settings." It further stated, *"The estimated lung cancer mortality rates due to nonoccupational asbestos exposures were found to be about 10,000 times lower than the rates due to tobacco smoking."* (Emphasis in original.)

• **1986, entry in the *Medical and Health Annual* of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,** by Dr. Ronald G. Crystal.

"Currently there is no evidence that the levels of the airborne asbestos found in public buildings, such as schools, present a hazard." —*MF*

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ological studies of persons with low exposure to asbestos either occupationally or environmentally provide little support for the concept that there is an increased risk of lung cancer when asbestos concentrations are at levels several hundred or thousand times lower than those found in workplace situations in the past."

The *NEJM* study went on to cite five studies (none of which, incidentally, appear elsewhere in this article) of persons exposed to asbestos which "show no statistically significant excess cases of lung cancer when concentrations of fibers are low." The study concludes: "In the absence of epidemiological data or estimations of risk that indicate that the health risks of environmental exposure to asbestos are large enough to justify high expenditure of public funds, one must question the unprecedented expenses on the order of $100 billion to $150 billion that could result from asbestos abatement."

The Harvard study, based on a symposium held last December and released August 10, found that the "lifetime risk of premature death due to indoor environmental tobacco smoke (i.e., living with a smoker) or living in a house that has radon is two hundred to four hundred times greater than the projected risks of dying from exposures to asbestos at concentrations" to which schoolchildren would be exposed in schools with friable asbestos. Death from smoking is 20,000 times more likely than from such low-level exposure; death from being run down by a motor vehicle while walking is 290 times more likely. [See table below.] And you read it here first, folks; the popular media ignored the study.

For the most part, these studies are ignored by abatement advocates as well: the danger, they attest, is so clear and present that batting around figures from studies is simply a waste of time. "There is no doubt that . . . asbestos material in our Nation's schools is placing our children at considerable risk," declared Rep. Norman Lent (R-NY), co-sponsor of AHERA and the ranking Republican on the Commerce, Transportation, and Tourism subcommittee. "I do not have to tell this subcommittee about the hazards posed by friable asbestos in schools and public and commercial buildings," said John J. Sweeney, international president of Service Employees International, in a written statement to the subcommittee. "In our view," went a statement by the AFL-CIO to the same subcommittee, "the presence of friable asbestos in our schools is a danger to the health and well-being of millions of students." No support for that view was given.

There are myriad studies of low-level asbestos exposure. Few are ever cited by mass-abatement proponents. One of these few was released by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in 1984—one of the first of the low-level exposure studies, and now one of the oldest. It is widely considered to be obsolete. For example, the study averages the cancer risk of all types of asbestos—a sensible calculation when little was known about the carcinogenic differences among the various types. It did say, however, that if chrysotile proved to be less carcinogenic, then "the assumption of equal potency may lead to overstated risk estimates." Sure enough, the 1989 Harvard study, citing three post-NAS studies, states:

> There is general agreement that crocidolite [blue] and amosite asbestos pose much greater risk of mesothelioma than chrysotile [and since] most commercial asbestos . . . used in the United States has been Canadian chrysotile . . . the application of mixed fiber risk models may be conservative.

The NAS study also estimated that the risk of mesothelioma was even higher than that of lung cancer, yet a study published later that year by the New Jersey Asbestos Policy Committee found that "it is very unlikely that nonoccupational exposures typical for the general public produce mesothelioma."

Not surprisingly, one of the highest estimates of the fatality rate from low-level asbestos exposure comes from a study conducted by the EPA and released in 1988. There it is estimated that 733,000 public and commercial buildings, or 20 percent of the total in the nation, contain friable asbestos. Half of these, ten percent of the total, were estimated to contain damaged asbestos. The study calculated that among the tens of millions of persons who will circulate through the buildings during the buildings' estimated average useful life, 3,300 asbestos-related fatalities will result, an average of twenty-five deaths per year. Nevertheless, the agency concluded that because there are not enough capable technicians to inspect all public and commercial buildings with asbestos to determine which need maintenance or removal, the greater present threat was that asbestos would be accidentally released into the air through faulty abatement. This is what was termed a "don't panic" approach.

They panicked anyway. The Service Employees International Union, which represents 150,000 building service workers, called the EPA's recommendation not to panic "particularly disturbing." James Florio (D-NJ), the sponsor of AHERA in the House of Representatives and the chairman of the Commerce, Transportation, and Tourism subcommittee, responded to the report by announcing that he would consider legislation requiring federal intervention to lower the asbestos risks in public buildings. (Former Senator Robert Stafford, Republican of Vermont and a sponsor of AHERA in the Senate, had in fact introduced legislation in 1987 to do just that.) "Everything in this report," Florio said, "points toward aggressive federal intervention except EPA's recommendations, which amount to nothing more than sweeping this alarming problem under the rug."

But before we start shelling out hundreds of billions for universal abatement, some key points should be made about the EPA study that so alarmed Rep. Florio and his abatement absolutists. First, the agency reported that the worst airborne asbestos levels in a sampling of forty-three federal buildings were no higher than the levels found in the air outside the buildings. You can't abate the great outdoors. Further, that finding casts doubt on the validity of the 3,300-deaths figure. Generally, when we consider the carcinogenic effects of substances we look for incidence of the substance above the background or "ambient" level. It is difficult to argue that one can have an incidence above ambient level when the indoor exposure matches the outdoor exposure. If, in other words, a person set up his office outside a building containing damaged friable asbestos, the EPA estimate would apply to him just as surely as if he worked inside.

Second, while the EPA estimate on future deaths from low-level exposure is above that of numerous other studies, it is still very much in the same ballpark. Driving a car to work is over 150 times more dangerous than EPA says working in a building with damaged friable asbestos is. In a nation that reports about a million cancer cases a year, this EPA figure would represent about 0.0025 percent of all such malignancies.

There is, in short, practically nothing that one can think of as fatal, other than shark attacks and bubonic plague, that kills as few as twenty-five Americans each year. Hearing the NEA warn about the 15 million students and 1.4 million adults at risk, one might never know that, even granting EPA estimates, the risk experienced by attending a school for ten years with 0.001 fibers per cubic centimeter average asbestos exposures (an amount actually higher than that found in most schools with asbestos) would be equivalent to the risk a person runs by smoking a lifetime total of five cigarettes, absorbing radiation from living in a brick building for seven months, living with a smoker for seven months, or riding in a motor vehicle a total of 1,000 miles.

There is, however, a group of people who are truly at risk from asbestos exposure—a group that never shows up in the calculations (such as they are) of the abatement advocates. These are the persons performing the actual abatements required by law, and those who might fall victim to slipshod abatement.

The Real Victims

Asbestos abatement usually consists of scraping walls, ceilings, and beams

PUBLISHED ESTIMATES OF RISK FROM VARIOUS CAUSES (MAINLY U.S. DATA)*

Cause	Voluntary (V) or Involuntary (I)	Lifetime Risk of Premature Death (per 100,000)
Smoking (all causes)	V	21,900
Smoking (cancer only)	V	8,800
Motor Vehicle	I	1,600
Frequent Airline Passenger	V/I	730
Coal Mining Accidents	I/V	441
Indoor Radon	V/I	400
Motor Vehicle - Pedestrian	I	290
Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Living with a Smoker	I/V	200
Diagnostic X-rays	I	75
Cycling Deaths	I/V	75
Consuming Miami or New Orleans Drinking Water	I	7
Lightning	I	3
Hurricanes	I	3
Asbestos in School Buildings	I	1

*Sources of Risk Estimate: Commins (1985), Weill and Hughes (1986), Wilson and Crouch (1982)

Reprinted from "Summary of Symposium on Health Aspects of Exposure to Asbestos in Buildings," published by Harvard University Energy and Environmental Policy Center, August 1989.

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square foot by square foot, and even though federal regulations require that workers performing abatement use respirators and wear outfits that resemble space suits, injury to lung tissues remains a severe problem. In fact, the Occupational and Safety Hazard Administration (OSHA) estimated that men working under its pre-July 1986 standards will incur sixty-four lung cancers from asbestos exposure for each 1,000 working men; by the more stringent current standards, it estimates six casualties per 1,000. Exactly how many cancers that equals is not possible to say, since no one keeps figures on how many persons do such work. The National Asbestos Council estimates that, depending on the season, there are about 4,000 contractors who remove asbestos, each of whom can employ anywhere from a handful of workers to thousands; hundreds of employees at peak season is not uncommon for the larger contractors. Thus, even under OSHA standards, asbestos abatement could result in a proportionately high number of deaths per year.

But many contractors don't even use OSHA or EPA standards. Because asbestos abatement is so frightfully expensive when done properly, the temptation to do it improperly is immense. Stories abound of lower-class and immigrant workers who have been duped into believing asbestos removal was just a routine job, requiring no mask or special clothing. Of building superintendents in New York, one local health official said: "Half of these guys don't speak English and if you offer them $50 and point to what you want torn out, they'll do anything for you." According to a criminal complaint filed in Manhattan, a building porter was hired to rip asbestos out of a boiler room in a building being converted into co-operatives. The porter, who spoke no English and was completely unaware of the risk, pulled the asbestos off fifteen pipes with his bare hands until the building superintendent saw the white cloud of dust and told him to stop. In San Antonio, 166 workers have sued a contractor who hired them while they were homeless. They claim they were not told the material they removed was asbestos, and all wore little or no protection.

Nor is it surprising, with such high financial stakes, that some bribery occurs on those occasions when inspectors *are* monitoring abatements. In New York last year, officials of twenty-three companies (twenty-five men in all), representing the majority of concerns involved in the removal and disposal of asbestos material in the New York metropolitan region, were charged with bribing an EPA inspector. While officials said that there appeared to be little danger to the public in the illegal removals, which included part of Madison Square Garden, the New York Coliseum, and the former Gimbel's department store, hundreds and possibly thousands of asbestos removers were at risk. An officer of the U.S. Department of Labor described the workers as being from the "low end of the social scale." Some of them, in fact, were reportedly foreign nationals employed illegally while on a one-year tourist visa. They have since returned home—many perhaps with a 30-year time bomb ticking away in their lungs.

Because asbestos abatement is so frightfully expensive when done properly, the temptation to do it improperly is immense.

The blunt reality is this: the greater the amount of asbestos that is removed, the greater the number of people who will die from removing it. If sixty-four of 1,000 workers under OSHA's old regulations will succumb to asbestos-related cancer, how many unprotected workers are at risk now, only because we have required abatements that the evidence shows were unnecessary to begin with? Many occupations, of course, carry with them a risk of death, but do we want to put asbestos abatement alongside firefighting, law enforcement, coal mining, construction, and soldiering? Especially when it inevitably leads to the exploitation of immigrants and the homeless?

The answer might be, again, that such risks must be taken if we are to reduce the risks to schoolchildren and office workers from uncertain levels to zero (or almost zero). Alas, that is probably not the case, for—as even the pro-abatement forces acknowledge—the greatest risk of asbestos exposure in a non-occupational setting arises when asbestos is *disturbed*. Obviously, nothing disturbs asbestos like removing it. Any removal job that requires scraping will necessarily disperse asbestos into the air. The congressionally chartered National Institute of Building Sciences noted in 1984: "Whether the removal process involves dry or wet disruption of the in-place asbestos, data shows that a substantial quantity becomes resuspended and recirculated throughout the building."

With schools, this is somewhat less of a problem, since the building can be kept clear for the summer while the work is done. But multi-story office buildings are generally abated floor by floor, exposing the occupants on other floors to high asbestos levels during the entire project—and after. Air quality testing of abatement sites has found exceptionally high levels of airborne asbestos for up to ten months after the abatement work was completed. EPA does regulate how high levels may go after an abatement, but that level—.02 fibers per cubic centimeter of air—is many times *higher* than that found in most buildings prior to abatement. The typical school with asbestos-containing materials, for example, has less than 0.0009 fibers per cubic centimeter before abatement. Thus abatement can mean an extra ten months of asbestos exposure at much higher levels than those to which occupants were exposed before abatement.

Rip and Skip

Once more, however, the most troublesome problem lies not with work conforming to federal or state standards but with work that does not conform.

The rush to abate America has given rise to what some have called abatement "pirates" or "rip and skip" abaters. As one writer put it in the *Kansas City Star*, "Their strategy is simple: Underbid the competition, rip out the asbestos quickly, cut regulatory corners, then skip town to the next job before authorities catch up." These people care little for the safety of their workers or the occupants—present or future—of the buildings they're abating; they want easy money. In one case, state inspectors discovered asbestos dust littering floors and windows in a Kansas junior high school where removal was supposedly finished. In another school in Kansas, it was found that while a reputable third party was monitoring an asbestos removal crew during the day, during the night the abater would sneak in a large crew to do the bulk removal without proper supervision or safeguards. These "rip and skippers" were caught, but it's a safe bet that most are not. In fact, in 1986 EPA estimated that as much as three-fourths of all asbestos abatement work is being conducted improperly. With the massive increase in the number of abatements nationwide, it is difficult to say whether this percentage is improving; it might even be growing worse.

Further, even if one assumes that *correctly* removing asbestos lowers the risk of asbestos-related disease, questions remain about how the asbestos will be replaced. In a paper delivered recently at a conference sponsored by the Society of Mining Engineers and the National Stone Association, Malcolm Ross of the U.S. Geological Survey noted that manmade asbestos replacements, called "vitreous fibers" or "glassy fibers," "have been studied intensively and statistically significant studies are just now being reported." Drawing on two separate reports, one of over 25,000 workers in thirteen plants in Europe and one of over 16,000 workers at seventeen plants in the United States, Ross found that

> a statistically significant excess of lung cancer (52 percent) is seen in these [manmade mineral fibers]. Exposure was generally less than 1 fiber per cubic [centimeter] and most commonly in the range of 0.01 to 0.1 fibers per cubic [centimeter]. In contrast, the Quebec chrysotile asbestos miners

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and millers with at least 20 years service in the industry and exposed to between 10 and 21 fibers per [centimeter] showed an excess of lung cancer of 12 percent.

Moreover, notes Ross, numerous such fibers have tested positively for tumor production in animals. Thus, to the extent that low-level asbestos exposure can be said to cause cancer, there is every reason to think that much of what is being used to replace asbestos will cause even more cancer. Those maintenance workers who are daily exposed to asbestos in insulation and fireproofing materials, and who are clearly at risk, may very well be at greater risk after the asbestos is replaced.

Abategate

By the time one finishes subtracting potential asbestos-related deaths from the potential deaths linked to the other causes listed above, the question is probably not how many lives we will save with our $100 billion (or more) investment but how many we will lose. As an experiment in life-saving, widescale asbestos abatement may be the dumbest idea in modern times. Only a tremendously affluent country like the United States could possibly afford such foolhardiness. Why the hysteria?

There is, for starters, an anti-commercial animus among the abatement enthusiasts which leads them, predictably, to cast the asbestos industry as the villain. The logic of much of their argument runs something like this: manufacturers of asbestos products have a financial interest in downplaying the risk of low-level exposure, therefore when they do so they are lying; and because they are lying when they downplay the risk of low-level exposure, low-level exposure must therefore be inordinately dangerous. Hence their disdain, shown above, for actual studies on the effects of asbestos exposure.

What's more, with the asbestos manufacturers as the convenient villains, abatement companies present themselves, with equal convenience, as white knights. But they can just as easily—more easily, in fact—be seen as parasites cashing in on the hysteria. The abatement industry grew from a $200 million a year industry in 1983 to one with revenues topping $2.7 billion in 1988. Magazines like *American School and University* are filled with asbestos-abatement advertisements posing as public interest articles. (The biggest type in one such ad reads, "IT'S THE LAW," for which, as in the 55-mile-per-hour speed limit, the unspoken antecedent is: "It may sound stupid to you, but . . .") Leafing through *Asbestos Issues*, you find articles like the one by the executive director of the Mid-America Association of Asbestos Contractors, Jack Hart, who praises his fellow abaters for their compassion. Many such, Hart says, will advise their clients to abate asbestos now, without waiting for an EPA order (which, of course, may never come). And the recommended course of action, naturally, is the more costly removal rather than mere encapsulization. "I say don't take the risk. Get the stuff out."

The hysteria is also fueled by the media, which can always be counted on to sensationalize. "Discovering That Their Home Is Walled With Asbestos, a Florida Family Flees the Dangerous Dust," ran the title of one short *People* magazine story. Noting that some asbestos-related lung cancer may not develop for decades, the piece ends: "More disturbing than the loss of a home is the prospect of a future tainted with doubt." *USA Today* always leads the nation's newspapers in alarmism, and asbestos has proved no exception: "There's a killer in the corridors, gyms, or boiler rooms of 40,000 schools across the USA," it recently shrieked.

Stories abound of lower-class and immigrant workers who have been duped into believing asbestos removal was just a routine job, requiring no mask or special clothing.

Good Housekeeping magazine, with a circulation of five million, ran an article titled, "I Saved My Family from Asbestos Contamination," by a woman who found some asbestos wrapped around the furnace pipes in her home. She reported suffering "many sleepless nights wondering if asbestos particles hadn't already escaped into the air and endangered my family." She simply couldn't understand why the various authorities and firms she contacted did not share her trepidation over the "death-dealing material." Only at the very end of the story, as an afterthought, does she reveal that subsequent tests showed that no asbestos fibers had been released into the air. And where had the woman first heard of asbestos's dangers? In an earlier article in *Good Housekeeping*.

And then there's Congress, where Rep. James Florio has led the pack in abatement alarmism. (Florio is now running for governor of New Jersey against Congressman Jim Courter.) While the NEA has called Florio "courageous" for his advocacy of asbestos abatement, in fact he has been essentially without opposition in Congress. AHERA was passed out of Florio's committee without dissent and passed both the House and Senate by voice vote. Florio has said abatement regulation was essential because abatement was already being done and being done poorly—rather like saying that because heroin users are sharing needles, we should mandate that everyone use heroin, so long, of course, as they do it according to strict government standards. People will indeed still remove asbestos, owing to market pressures or simply to fear. The proper way of dealing with this is either to forbid the removal or to require that whatever removal occurs be done according to strict regulation. *Ordering* removal, as AHERA does and as a related law for non-school buildings would, doesn't address the problem of slipshod abatement any more than ordering airlines to fly planes resolves problems of air safety.

Yet Florio does not operate alone. AHERA was signed into law by the supposedly anti-regulation Reagan White House without so much as a hint of a veto, and, as noted, was introduced in the Senate by a Republican, Robert Stafford. And the ranking Republican on Florio's committee, Norman Lent of New York, was a co-sponsor of AHERA.

The Sleeping Dog

As one scientist, writing on the op-ed page of *USA Today*, put it: "Asbestos is like a big sleeping dog. If not stirred up, it does no harm. If hammered or sawed upon, it may bite anyone near it." The best way of dealing with asbestos in school buildings and workplaces is the way most homes with asbestos are dealt with: leave the material alone unless there is a special reason for it to be disturbed. To this end, it is good that the EPA ordered schools to identify the location of asbestos, both to prevent disturbance and to provide warning of possible dust dispersal if a disturbance does take place. Identification and management should probably be supplemented with periodic air sampling. If sampling shows dangerous levels of airborne asbestos, then and only then is removal or encapsulization warranted. (This assumes that EPA will finally set an air quality standard for asbestos, which it has not yet done.) Such testing is not cheap: about $600 for electron microscopy, the most accurate type of testing. But compared to abatement, it's a real bargain. And mass production of monitoring equipment could drive prices down.

Several states have recently adopted air sampling as part of their regulatory apparatus. Florida, for example, has established an abatement "action level" of 0.01 fibers per cubic centimeter, using a tiered system of optical and electron microscopy techniques. EPA argues that air sampling is unreliable because it only provides a "snapshot" which doesn't take into account peak exposures when asbestos is disturbed. But that is why special precautions are taken to make sure it *isn't* disturbed. If a janitor running a broom across a ceiling disturbs asbestos, then janitors should be told not to do that. If bouncing a basketball against a gym ceiling disturbs fibers in the tiles (a favorite fanciful scenario of the abatement enthusiasts—how often do basketballs hit ceilings, and how much asbestos is going to be released with one hit?), then kids should be told not to do that. It's not a perfect solution. It's simply the most cost-effective—and the safest. Leave the sleeping dog alone. It will save lives and perhaps hundreds of billions of dollars. That should be worth something, shouldn't it? ☐

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Alex Heard

BRAT PACK II

It seems like days—or is it weeks?—since the original literary Brat Pack of Jay McInerney, Tama Janowitz, Bret Easton Ellis, et al. had us under siege. Now the publishing world appears ready to unleash yet another pack. Here's what to watch for in the next fifteen minutes.

"People are waiting for me to pull a kind of a Fitzgerald in my life and die of an overdose."

—Jay McInerney
New York magazine, September 1988

Things happen fast in literary Young America. Here we had a 33-year-old talking about staving off the Fitzgeraldian "crackup," which traditionally hasn't been a source of worry until the midlife downturn of a career—at age 45 or 50. (Apparently he failed: on the cover of the July *Esquire*, McInerney, maddened by nasty reviews of *Story of My Life*, is in a Ninja suit, waving a sword with which he intends to "skewer his critics.") Tama Janowitz, in about an hour, went from being the literary equivalent of the young Carol Channing (the quirky, darling one people liked) to the old Carol Channing (the quirky, ridiculous one who chases down blondes in the street and tries to buy their hair for her wigs). Bret Easton Ellis, in his mid-twenties, looks as weighed down and jowly as the *Final Days* Nixon. Susan Minot has a streak of gray in her mop. And David Leavitt (I *think* I read this somewhere) is playing bass guitar in a sixties nostalgia band led by Butch "Eddie Munster" Patrick.

They have reason to be depressed. All of them followed-up their first books with resounding bombs, and there's a has-beenish feel to this bunch. Meanwhile, the same youth-disgorging publishing machinery that helped create them (and that they helped create) is serving up *fresh* fresh new voices. *USA Today* recently published a feature on a horde of very young Ivy League writers—all but one are 26 or under—who will soon be in our faces: among others, John Burnham Schwartz (in our faces already; author of *Bicycle Days*, the story of a young man coming of age in Japan), Jonathan Ames (coming soon; author of *I Pass Like Night*, the tale of a young man from the suburbs coming of age on New York's angsty streets), Marti Leimbach (*Dying Young*, about a young man coming of age while dying), Eric Swanson (*The Greenhouse Effect*, a tale of a young man coming of age while trying to make it as an actor in New York), and David Lipsky (*Three Thousand Dollars*, a book of short stories, most of them satirical looks at young men coming of age haphazardly in prep school and the Ivy League).

Alex Heard is a Washington writer.

See any useful patterns? No, not the coming-of-age part: that's old news. But, extrapolating from this sample, you can expect that a large proportion of the fresh new voices who whine down the pike in the next few years will be from the Ivy League, the smaller elite northeastern private schools, or (the farm system) the University of Iowa, because the network that produced Bret Easton Ellis is still in place. Ellis, you will recall, was a student at Bennington when his mentor, Joe McGinniss, dispatched his stuff to hip young Simon and Schuster editor Morgan Entrekin, at which point the wheels started turning and didn't stop until millions of people were crushed under the bathos juggernaut that was *Less Than Zero: The Movie*. Gerald Howard, an editor at W. W. Norton, described the machinery like so in the Summer 1989 *American Scholar*: "The proliferation of creative writing programs has made possible *ab ovo* a career management approach to literature. Go to the right college, get into the right MFA program, make the right contacts among established writers and book and magazine editors, find the right literary agent, who'll sell your book to the right publisher, who'll give your book the right cover and shake down the right writers (some of whom you already know, of course) for the right blurbs, and you're off!"

It's not that simple, obviously, but anyone who thinks the right school and well-placed mentors don't help is kidding himself. Schwartz got heavy mentorial fondling from David Halberstam, an old family friend. In the official version of how Schwartz came to the attention of superagent Amanda "Binky" Urban, Halberstam served as the go-between and drill sergeant who pushed Schwartz hard during rewrite time. (In the unofficial, rumored version, which Urban denies, Urban is the old family friend, and there was no go-between.) For Ames, it was Princeton faculty member Joyce Carol Oates. For the rest—well, we don't know yet, but we'll doubtless hear all about them soon enough.

Most of these writers are going to disappear from sight faster than a burger placed in front of Wimpy, and it's interesting, in a morbid way, to watch what the publishers do to achieve maximum hype-istic frenzy while they last. At present only two of the novels are available for serious study (*Bicycle Days* and *I Pass Like Night*, published by Summit Books and William Morrow, respectively) and only *Bicycle Days* has gone through the entire hype cycle. Successfully, too. This past summer, as you probably noticed unless you were in Auckland, was the Season of Schwartz. In terms of setting the pace for peers who will follow, he's shaping up to be the McInerney of his Generation, and the marketing of this talented, brooding youth featured a few interesting twists that I feel sure we'll see again.

First, predictably, was vociferous *Disassociation from the Original Brat Pack*. Brat Pack I never marched in lockstep—there were grim writers (Ellis, for example) and gentle writers (Leavitt)—but the official line, as pushed this summer by Schwartz's handlers, is that most all of them were sour-faced nihilist snots. "[Schwartz] radiates none of the I've-seen-it-all, tried-it-all, smoked-it-all and drunk-it-all qualities that characterize many of his comrades in the burgeoning literary Brat Pack of *auteurs* under the age of 30," the *Los Angeles Times*'s Elizabeth Mehren gushed. "He seems eager, not bored or blasé. Like Ethan Canin, a best seller by age 27 and an inspiration of sorts to John Burnham Schwartz, he writes with hope. . . . Not one character takes drugs or undergoes a crisis of gender identification, the staples of what his editor, Ileene Smith, calls 'all those fashionable and extremely irritating books' by young writers who seem to take negativity pills along with their morning coffee. 'I'm a positive person, I guess,' Schwartz [says]. 'I really enjoy people. I like to laugh, and I like to laugh at myself. As much as I can, I do.' "

And unlike BP I writers, Schwartz is not a self-obsessed navel gazer. "Lest he be accused of creating an autobiographical character," the *L. A. Times* said, "Schwartz . . . disguises Alec by making him a student at Yale." Schwartz went to Harvard. Nor is he a permaBrat: "Lately he has been read-

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Official Brat Pack II Literary Motif Sameness Chart: Alec v. Alex.

Though Bicycle Days *and* I Pass Like Night *have similarly named protagonists, the similarities would seem to end there: the former is hopeful and sweet, the latter is grim and nihilistic. But the novels share fundamental motifs, which we should watch for in Brat Pack II fiction released in the months ahead.*

	Bicycle Days. "Alec."	*I Pass Like Night.* "Alex."
Are Parental Doings a Major Source of Angst?	Yes. Dad is gruff and becomes angry at young Alec when, for example, he seems unable to pick up the rudiments of billiards. In flashback, Alec sees his dad's angry smashing of the racked balls as a prelude to the destruction of the family phalanx. At one point, also in flashback, a loud mom-versus-dad argument makes Alec wet his pajamas and vow to run away. His parents announce their decision to divorce while Alec is at boarding school. His reaction: "He closed himself up in one of the stalls and sat down on the lidded toilet . . . And with his face buried in the warm pocket formed by his own body, he cried."	Yes. Alex remembers how his dad used to take baths with his sister and him—"he always wanted to cuddle"—and the press of father-son flesh that ensued now makes Alex wonder, "Who knows what that has done to me."
Are There Other Sources of Angst?	Yes. Alec's romantic interest, Kiyoko, wipes her hand on his chest during sushi prep, making Alec think she is coming on to him. But when he hugs her, she flees, making Alec worry that he has made a fatal cultural *faux pas.*	Yes. Alex's friendship with his childhood pal Ethan dissolves after an episode of homosexual fumbling between the two. His habit of frequenting prostitutes, his in-toilet-stall encounters with street homosexuals, and his frequent anal intercourse all make him worry about catching AIDS. The suicide of a charismatic neighborhood figure, Roy Ladner, rankles in memory, and Alex (in flashback) wonders if his suburb would mourn him if he committed suicide. Also: Alex has to watch the vet put his aging, diseased dog to sleep. "I held him down and he fought, and maybe a milky gray eye rolled up at me, the last thing he saw, and I pushed my fingers into him, stay down Nicky, stop Nicky, and he was dead. . . . I went out to the car and banged my hands on the steering wheel."
Is There Blatant Womb or Umbilical Cord Imagery?	Yes. Alec flashes back to a time when he got separated from mom while Christmas shopping in New York. "They were walking along Fifth Avenue, just in front of Rockefeller Center. She held his hand through his thick wool mitten. Holding hands was their lifeline, she said—protection from the crush of the Christmas crowd . . ." Alec gets lost, but mom and son reunite shortly. "And then she was holding him, his red face hard against her chest, both of them crying. It would never happen again, she said. Never. Never, Alec said."	Yes. "When my mother was pregnant with me John F. Kennedy was assassinated and she cried. And years later when I would watch football she would always want Dallas to lose." Also, during an encounter with a street prostitute, Alex symbolically attempts to crawl back into the womb: ". . . That's what I wanted, to be lost in . . . this great black woman twice my size. . . . my little white body, hips half the size of hers—pulled in, sucked in, and lost forever."
Does Something Fundamental Happen to the Character in School or at Camp?	Yes. "[Alec] had been thirteen and just beginning to learn basic physics in school. He discovered that there were theories for the forces that bind atoms together and theories for the forces that break them apart. . . . He gave [the latter] his own name, destruction theory. . . . It seemed that science was all about the world's breaking apart. . . . And he thought that there was little left to wonder about after that, except whether the theory spoke not just about cold matter, but about families, too."	Yes. At camp, age 13, Alex is fondled by a counselor who rubs calamine lotion on his private parts.
Is There Important Bike Imagery?	Yes. Alec's theft of a bike symbolizes his ongoing desire to "ride away from" his family—the bike, in short, is his vehicle of liberation.	Yes. The youth who committed suicide in Alex's neighborhood had a clunky bike, because his parents couldn't afford a better one (and, it was rumored, couldn't afford to send him to college). This is why he hangs himself, and for Alex, the "clunky" bike symbolizes the harshness of the real world.
Are There Passages That Show the Editor Was Busier Hyping than Editing?	Yes. [Alec said,] "You can think you've thought something out to the point of understanding yourself. But then sometimes things come out while you're talking, and you realize that if you keep going, all you'll discover are how many things you really don't understand." "You do not sound happy," [Kiyoko] said.	Yes. "One time when we [Alex and a "friend" who also debauches] went out, before they started using condoms, his whore wagged her head no to [his] offer of the tissue and instead leaned across him and spit his sperm out his open window . . . I turned around, looked out the back window, and saw a truck pass over the splotch in the road that was his sperm. I thought of it being in the tire's tread and being carried far out into New Jersey and beyond, spread over highways everywhere, his DNA merging with the dashed lines of the Jersey Turnpike."

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ing Plato. 'Why not?' he said. 'I want to find out what fits where. I would like to have a world view that is larger than the one I have.' "

The second gambit of note was the *Preemptive Strike Against the "Privileged Youth" Issue.* We'll see variations on this one. Some young writers will focus only on the alleged liabilities of being a young writer. Marti Leimbach did this brilliantly in *USA Today* when she groused, "The word 'potential' implies what we have in front of us isn't up to par. I know 26 isn't that old, but it's my whole life. How old are you supposed to be before you write a book?" (Also, look for this quote in months ahead: "I don't want the media to do a Bret Ellis on me. Just leave me in peace to practice my *craft.*")

For Schwartz, who was at once young, well-off, and well-connected—he prepped at Choate, went to college at Harvard, and had a job lined up at First Boston upon graduation—the trick was to prove that these things were in fact *obstacles* that stood between a young man and his art. "I realized that I'd been on a track all my life," he told *New York*, "from Choate to Harvard, and whole parts of my life had gotten submerged." But with help from the Muse he punched his way out of the pinstriped suit. According to the *L. A. Times* piece, at age 19 John, returning from a trip to Maui with his mother and stepfather (the poet W. S. Merwin), impulsively scribbled a short story on an air sickness bag, titled, "A Sensitive Man of the 80s." At Harvard he majored in East Asian studies and took economics classes—all in preparation for the philistine career in banking. But the flames did not die, and after graduation, in a Kerouacian "three-week nonstop, no-sleep frenzy at his word processor," he wrote a novel—based on his experiences working for TRW two summers in Japan—as his thesis. This is what caught Binky's eye. John retreated to Nantucket, where he further paid his dues spending a hellish year in a vacation cottage rewriting the book four times.

Finally, keep an eye on the all-important angling for *Off-the-Book-Page Coverage*. Tama Janowitz pioneered this, but her techniques—the three-foot-high fright wig, Amaretto ads, and crashing into the Four Seasons to hand out leaflets touting her book—are out. This time, diffident, rabbity shyness will be in, and if the author happens to be pretty, his or her publicists will make sure the dust-flap photo gets blown up extra-large. Schwartz's boyish good looks have not gone unnoticed. "[The] backjacket cover is a windblown portrait showing off his thick sheaf of hair, intense eyes, and open face," sighed *New York.* Jonathan Ames's keepers may be carrying this bit too far, though. Ames, with his tousled blond hair and sweaty, chiseled face, is blurbed like so on the back of *I Pass Like Night*: "Jonathan Ames . . . is the winner of a Henfield/Transatlantic Review award. He has modeled for Bruce Weber and Horst." Ames sagely downplayed this fact in an interview, saying he only modeled for a few weeks (in one widely seen print ad, he sported about in red underwear with three scantily clad women), but a telling irony occurs in his novel, when the protagonist muses, "If my mind really takes off I start projecting down the road a few months and I see black-and-white pictures of myself in *Vanity Fair* . . ." Ames says he has already been thus featured—as author, not model—in the magazine's section on hot new faces.

Returning from a trip to Maui with his mother, Schwartz impulsively scribbled a short story on an air sickness bag, titled, "A Sensitive Man of the '80s."

Thoughtful reviewers will notice that I philistinishly haven't said a word about . . . the work. Can John Burnham Schwartz write? Oh, I suppose. But he's not nearly as good as the hypesters would have you believe, and if we follow the Leimbach Dictum that age shouldn't be factored into considerations of literary merit, the novel falls short of half-assed. The hero, Alec, arrives in Tokyo after graduating—*from Yale*—and meets the host family with whom he will stay during his trial year at an American firm, Compucom, Inc. Lying on his futon the first night in this alien land, he thinks back to the first time he was sent off to summer camp. "He had not wanted to go away then," we read in Chapter Two. "He had cried and screamed at his parents. It hadn't been his decision—not the way it had been later, when he went away to school . . ." Yes, this boy is mad at his family. And I'm sorry, but that's when I began to miss the old McInerney/Ellis sex-and-drug romps through nightclubs. As it turns out, the dramatic nut here is that Mom and Dad—no, they didn't die; that was the staple of BP I writers—they . . . get divorced when Alec is 15. In a purely non-autobiographical coincidence, the exact same thing happened to Schwartz when he was at Choate. In response, he told the *L.A. Times,* at Harvard "he staged a 'tumultuous' freshman year with mandatory complements of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll." Unfortunately this is the kinder-gentlerized version, so we don't get that.

What we do get, in the novel's first half, are whimsical, occasionally funny and sharp sketches of Tokyo life that keep the novel on autopilot until Schwartz has to return to Alec's divorce-caused angst. Reviewers have lauded the book for its sparkling, original insights into Japanese culture, but I just don't know. Among the things we learn are: Japanese are chauvinistic; Tokyo is crowded and it costs a lot to play golf there; Japanese women don't respond to come-ons by foreigners; the Japanese don't like Koreans; Japanese businessmen are proud, mysterious, and do gross things to Filipino prostitutes; many Japanese youth are attracted to Western ways; many Japanese slurp when they eat; Japanese think Americans are big and hairy; tea ceremony teaches the art of patience; and Americans are better at baseball. (I've never been to Japan, but I knew all these things from reading *Junior Scholastic.*)

A few of the characters are interesting—I of course especially liked the Korean, Park, who takes Alec to a club where Japanese businessmen play Rock, Paper, and Scissors to see who gets to strip naked and go onstage to receive manual dexterity demonstrations from prostitutes. But some of them—well, if they aren't stereotypes, then I'm staying clear of Japan. Especially Northern Japan, where Alec spends a weekend learning the ways of the Pat-Morita-in-the-*Karate-Kid*-like grandparents of the Japanese woman he loves. Grandfather takes Alec fishing, but Alec, he too impatient and scare fish away while Grandfather, he patient and fill up creel with trout. Inside the house, as Alec chops an onion with Zen carefulness, Grandmother explains that simple acts have *much* meaning. "With Grandfather, you can practice fishing and chopping wood. . . . And with Grandmother, you can practice cooking. . . . In Yamadera, these are the important things, Alec. In Tokyo, in the cities, these things are no longer important."

Fortunately, Alec scurries back to Tokyo and, with a penumbra of wisdom now radiating from his being, succeeds in bedding his true love, Kiyoko, the granddaughter of the wise old pair. (True to her genes, she bores us first: "Tea ceremony is about beauty and waiting," she tells Alec. "And there can be great pleasure in waiting. Tonight, I would like to do that for you, Alec. To make you wait and give you pleasure.") But by now unhappiness is at hand: a major source of Alec's angst, his older brother Mark, has shown up in Tokyo to berate him about not keeping in touch with the family. (Jay McInerney used a similar plotline in his Japan novel, *Ransom*, though in that case the disgruntled family member was dad.) They argue, in the process stomping the old theater injunction "Show Me, Don't Tell Me" flatter than a Kansas roadkill. Alec says he had run away to escape the old pains and ties. Mark yells: "I guess it's my fault for thinking that family still meant something to you. And my fault for thinking you'd be there for me when I needed you. But life's too short to waste time thinking about family, isn't it? And you're too goddamn selfish. Just be careful you don't get the same treatment if you ever try to come back home." After this Alec steals a bike, gets jailed, yells at his boss, brattily ignores Kiyoko until she breaks up with him, Grandfather dies—making Alec feel quasi-filial loss—and eventually he does the right thing: he quits his job and goes home to family. Even his dour boss, Mr. Joe Boon, agrees this is good. In *Ransom*, by contrast, the headstrong hero didn't do this, and as a result got killed in a Samurai fight with an ex-Marine.

There is a glimmer of hope that BP II may not be uniformly wussy, and that is Jonathan Ames's *I Pass Like Night.* I can't honestly recommend it (for more details from this novel, see my Official Brat Pack II Literary Motif Sameness Chart, on the page opposite), but I hope he doesn't get handled as roughly as I think he will. Ames is writing in what might be called the "classical" Brat Pack mode: his novel is the story of a very, very, very confused bisexual young man who takes drugs, sleeps with virtually anybody of any sex, and is about three clicks angrier than the Tasmanian Devil. And at the end (refreshingly, following the Schwartzian nicefest), there is no sign his anti-hero, Alex, will reform. Alex has a gentle side too, which emerges in his encounters with street people, but Ames does what he can to suppress it. "I made him meaner than I am," Ames told me in an interview. "There's one scene where Alex hooks his best friend in the face with a fishing lure while casting off a pier. I did that to a friend when I was a kid. But it was an accident. Alex, though, *means* to do it." Somebody re-up this kid's contract, pronto. □

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CARROT AND SHTICK

by Terry Teachout

FLUSHING: Why announce the death of Sir Laurence Olivier on the front page while the death of a greater American, Mel Blanc, rated only a mention on page 7 the day before? Let's face it, Olivier was only reading words written by others while Blanc created some of the most famous characters of all time—Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Foghorn Leghorn, Barney Rubble—the list is endless. According to the Associated Press, it is estimated that Blanc's voice is heard by 20 million people daily. How many were touched by Olivier's talent during the same time period? Far fewer, I can assure you.

—"Voice of the People"
New York Daily News, July 24

You beg to differ? Fair enough. But before you write off Bugs Bunny and his friends as a mere footnote to cinematic history, see if the following snatches of dialogue ring any bells: (1) "Shoot me again! I enjoy it! I love the smell of burnt feathers and gunpowder and cordite! I'm an elk—shoot me, go on, it's elk season! It's fiddler crab season!" (2) "I have sent for you, Dodgers, because we are facing a crisis. The world's supply of Aludium Phosdex, the 'shaving cream' atom, is alarmingly low. We have reason to believe that the only source is on Planet X." (3) "I—I—I can't stand it . . . I gotta have a bird . . . I'm weak . . . *I'm weak!* . . . But I don't care! I can't help it! After all, I *am* a pussycat!"

Henry V? Wuthering Heights? Guess again. The first excerpt is from *Duck! Rabbit! Duck!*, directed by Chuck Jones and written by Michael Maltese; the second is from *Duck Dodgers in the 24½th Century*, also by Jones and Maltese; the third is from *Birds Anonymous*, directed by Friz Freleng and written by Warren Foster. All three films were one-reel animated short subjects made in the mid-'50s by the Warner Bros. cartoon studio and slipped into theatrical release together with whatever Warner feature happened to be playing at your neighborhood movie house that week. Unlike Walt Disney's full-length animated extravaganzas, they got next to no publicity. But if you saw one, even once, you probably remember it to this very day.

"The surprising facts about them," Manny Farber said of the Warner cartoons in the *New Republic* in 1943, "are that the good ones are masterpieces and the bad ones aren't a total loss." Truer words were never written. The only cartoon studio that could match Warner Bros. laugh for laugh during the '40s and '50s was MGM, where Tex Avery produced such frenzied one-shot exercises in animated surrealism as *King-Size Canary* and *Little Rural Riding Hood* while Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera churned out one hilarious Tom and Jerry cartoon after another. But Warner Bros. had a not-so-secret weapon: an unbeatable stable of great "actors." Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Sylvester, Wile E. Coyote, and Yosemite Sam were every bit as distinctive as the finest screen and radio comedians of their time, and at least a hundred of the thousand-odd shorts in which they starred are still as fresh as ink and paint.

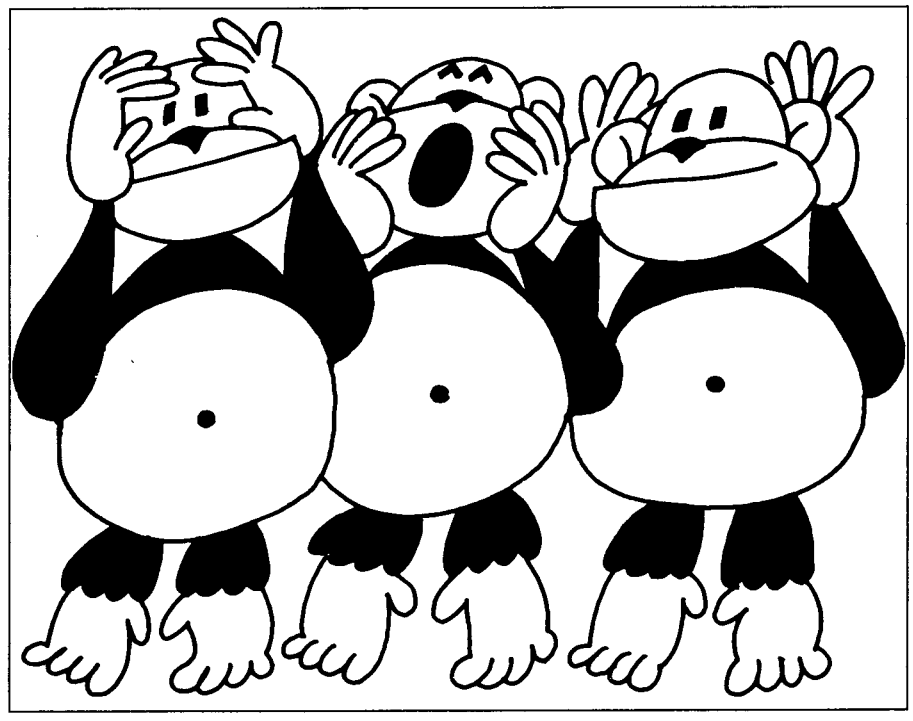
Don't take my word for it. Pick up one of the many videocassettes devoted to vintage Warner Bros. cartoons. Or, if you don't have a VCR, just turn on your television bright and early any Saturday morning.[1] Or alternatively, let me direct your attention to two new books about Warner Bros. cartoons, both published by Henry Holt. The first, Steve Schneider's *That's All Folks!: The Art of Warner Bros. Animation*, is a copiously illustrated, intelligently written coffee-table history of the Warner Bros. cartoon studio. The second, *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies: A Complete Illustrated Guide to the Warner Bros. Cartoons*, is a hefty paperback that contains complete plot synopses of every Warner Bros. cartoon ever made. If a quick stroll through either volume doesn't make you hunger to see Bugs Bunny & Co. in action, your sense of humor is malfunctioning.

What made Warner Bros. cartoons so special? It all started with Tex Avery, the first post-Disney animator to realize that animated cartoons could aspire to more than the saccharine "realism" of Walt Disney's "Silly Symphonies." Avery, who worked for Warner Bros. from 1936 to 1942, took the slapstick of the great silent comedians and stretched it beyond the bounds of the physically possible. "We found out early," he recalled,

> that if you did something with a character, either animal or human or whatnot, that couldn't possibly be rigged up in live action, why, then, you've got a guaranteed laugh. . . . They attempted to make Laurel and Hardy a cartoon series. Well, goodness, you can't copy their reactions and all of that. But if you can take a fellow and have him get hit on the head and then he cracks up like a piece of china, then you know you've got a laugh!

Before moving to MGM, Avery directed three key cartoons that introduced early versions of Warner's main characters, Porky Pig (*Gold Diggers of '49*, 1936), Daffy Duck (*Porky's Duck Hunt*, 1937), Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd (*A Wild Hare*, 1940). Director Bob Clampett subsequently refined Avery's basic prototypes into the classic characters that helped make Warner Bros. the most popular animation studio in America. Under Clampett's supervision, Bugs Bunny became the cartoon equivalent of the fast-talking school-of-Cagney tough guys who adorned so many Warner Bros. movies of the '30s; Daffy Duck played the ultimate screwball, a gleeful votary of the Great God Whirl, while Porky and Elmer, the ideal stooges, served as helpless, unwitting victims of the chaotic forces unleashed by the Bugs and Daffys of the world.

To be sure, Walt Disney remained the "prestige" animation studio throughout the '40s, raking in the Oscars and



[1]Most of the Warner Bros. cartoons shown on network television today are heavily cut, sometimes to accommodate commercials, more often because the wimpy network censors of the 1960s and '70s were paranoid about on-screen violence. If you want to see the real thing, your best bet is to rent or buy one of the many Warner cartoon collections available from Warner Home Video or MGM/UA Home Video. If your local video store doesn't have any, write to Whole Toon Access (Box 1604, 4710 University Way N.E., Seattle, WA 98105) and ask for a copy of *The Whole Toon Catalog*. If it's in print, Whole Toon Access can get it for you.

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monopolizing the attention of those few critics who were seriously interested in popular culture. But Disney made the kind of goody-goody cartoons your third-grade teacher wanted you to see, while Warner (and, later, MGM) made the kind of cartoons *you* wanted to see, the ones about talking animals who beat the hell out of each other. Improbable as it seemed, fully grown men were responsible for these elegantly composed collages of wisecracks, frying pans, malfunctioning catapults, and big red sticks of dynamite. Michael Maltese, Warren Foster, and Tedd Pierce wrote the best of the scripts; Mel Blanc and Stan Freberg did most of the voices; Carl Stalling composed reams of miraculously appropriate background music; Bob Clampett and Friz Freleng, the top cartoon directors at Warner during the '40s, welded it all into an *oeuvre* as immediately recognizable as the work of Ernst Lubitsch or Billy Wilder or John Ford.

With the departure of Clampett in 1946, Chuck Jones, a superb animator who described himself as "an actor with a pencil," became the dominant creative force at Warner Bros. Jones brought a new kind of psychological subtlety to the studio's already well-defined characters. "I'm principally concerned with character," he explained. "Not with what Bugs Bunny is, but *who* he is. I want to get inside him, and feel him from my viewpoint." Jones saw Bugs not as a malicious imp specializing in gratuitous acts but as a "counterrevolutionary," a peace-loving rabbit who attacked only when provoked. (It was Jones who gave Bugs his most characteristic line: "Of course you know *this* means war!") Likewise, he saw Daffy as a "self-preservationist," an animated id ceaselessly buffeted by all the baser emotions. The mere presence of a cool customer like Bugs invariably reduced Daffy to a quiveringly aggressive state of neurotic frustration, and when Jones brought Hubris and Nemesis together in *Rabbit Seasoning, Rabbit Fire,* and *Duck! Rabbit! Duck!,* his celebrated Bugs-Daffy-Elmer trilogy, the results were uncannily reminiscent of screwball comedy at its high-speed best.

Why did it all have to end so soon? What malign spirit caused the studios that once made cartoons like *Duck Amuck* and *What's Opera, Doc?* ("Kill the wabbit!") to start turning out Scooby Doo and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles instead? Blame it on capitalism. Fully animated cartoons are among the least cost-effective products a Hollywood studio can make. With the breakdown of the studio system, the major studios found it too expensive to keep their animation departments going. Disney abandoned the full-scale production of theatrical shorts in 1954, MGM in 1957. Warner Bros. hung on until 1969, but the quality of its output dropped off sharply in the late '50s, and few of its post-1960 shorts were worth watching.

The worst was yet to come. In one of the cruelest ironies of animation history, Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera, the creators of Tom and Jerry, developed "limited animation," an inexpensive form of mass-production animation based on the stylized graphic techniques devised in the late '40s by UPA (the studio that created Mr. Magoo). "Disney-type animation," Hanna explained, "is economically unfeasible for television, and we discovered that we could get away with less." Following the Hanna-Barbera lead, the surviving animation studios promptly began cranking out hundreds of shatteringly banal made-for-TV shorts. From time to time, unexpected flashes of wit would emerge from the Saturday morning slough. (Is not to be forgetting Moose and Squirrel, darling.) For the most part, though, animated cartoons regressed to the level of cheap, insipid fodder for dim-witted children.

Enter, just in the nick of time, the VCR. The executives at Walt Disney Home Video quickly cornered the kiddie market with expensively packaged videocassettes of animated shorts dating from the '30s and '40s. Though Warner Bros. and MGM/UA followed suit, their videocassettes sold modestly until the release last year of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit.* This brilliant evocation of High Hollywood Animation caused thousands of aging baby boomers to discover that the cartoons of their childhood were fully as funny as memory insisted. In the wake of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit,* Disney put together a new animation unit exclusively devoted to making Roger Rabbit shorts for theatrical release, and Warner Bros. even produced two brand-new Daffy Duck theatrical shorts, *The Duxorcist* and *Night of the Living Duck.*

Is a second golden age of animation just around the corner? Don't count on it. The economic conditions that made the mass production of fully animated short subjects possible in the '40s and '50s are gone forever. But the vaults of Warner Bros. and MGM are still full of buried treasure, and the cream of the postwar Warner crop is already available on videocassette. A modest investment on your part will pay for itself in hours of raucous laughter. Damn those Eisenhower-era brats. *We* never had it so good. □

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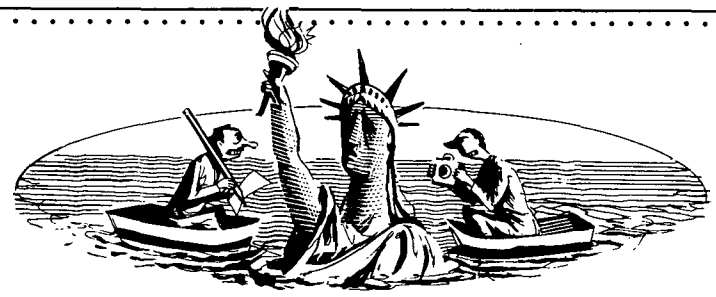


SUPREME COURT PRESS

by Terry Eastland

In its term ending in early July, the Supreme Court handed down five decisions involving civil rights, all of which were regarded as losses by the organized civil rights lobby. The subsequent journalism proved notable for several reasons.

• ***Inaccuracy.*** Here I have principally in mind *Time*'s treatment of the Court's decisions. The magazine told the nation (in a headline) that the Court was "Chipping Away at Civil Rights." That would have been news to the plaintiffs in at least three of the cases.

In *Richmond* v. *Croson*, for example, the Court overturned a Richmond, Virginia, ordinance that set aside 30 percent of public construction contracts for businesses owned by black, Spanish-speaking, Oriental, Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut citizens. (Yes, Eskimos and Aleuts in Richmond, notwithstanding that the 1980 Census found only three Eskimos and two Aleuts domiciled there.) The J. A. Croson Co., which is not a minority-owned firm, was the sole bidder on a Richmond contract yet was turned down. It sued, claiming that the city ordinance violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The company won, so there was a vindication of rights in this case. Yet *Time* reported an erosion of same.

To sustain such a conclusion, it's necessary to argue that non-minorities don't have civil rights. It's hard to believe *Time* actually believes that, but it's fair to observe that *Time* didn't make the argument.

The question is why *Time* reported the decisions as it did. One explanation is intellectual laziness, and believe it or not, when it comes to reporting on civil rights, there is a good bit of that around. The lazy journalist sees that minorities or women "lose" a case and concludes, as though by the punch of a computer key, that there has been a "chipping away at civil rights." Sometimes the lazy journalist comes by this view as a result of a conversation with someone like Ralph Neas, the executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, who talks about civil rights as though they belong exclusively to members of certain minority groups and women. (I can't recall a single case in which the traditional civil rights groups have sided with a white plaintiff in a civil rights case.) Of course, sometimes the lazy journalist is not really lazy but a true believer, unwilling to admit that minority preferences can discriminate against non-minorities. If *Time* was deliberately inaccurate, then I'll say it: the story was biased.

Newsweek's June 26 story was more accurate than *Time*'s, though not by much. It observed that the Court had "chipped [do the news magazines collude on choice of verbs?] away at programs designed to advance women and minorities in the work force." Okay, the Court did chip away in that sense, but it also chipped *in favor of* the rights of all citizens, regardless of race.

• ***Mindlessness.*** *Time* also wins this dubious Pulitzer. Its story contained some interesting labeling whereby no liberal was actually identified as such; only conservatives were.

Barry Goldstein was "Barry Goldstein of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund." Julius Chambers was "Julius Chambers, director, counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund." Eleanor Holmes Norton was "Georgetown law professor Eleanor Holmes Norton." And Laurence Tribe was "Harvard law professor Laurence Tribe."

On the other hand, *Time* identified Bruce Fein as "conservative court expert Bruce Fein." Walter Berns was "Walter Burns [sic] of the conservative American Enterprise Institute." And William Bradford Reynolds was "the controversial former Assistant Attorney General for civil rights in the Reagan administration." Presumably, *Time*'s dictionary lists "controversial" and "conservative" as synonyms.

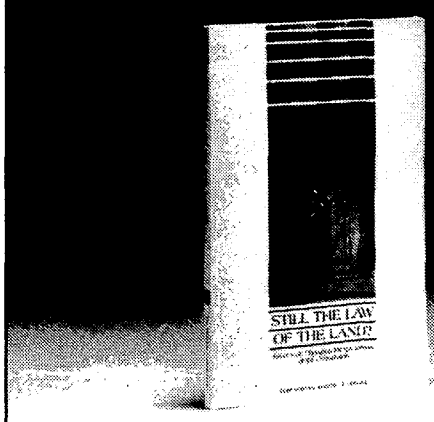
Why the labeling for the latter but not the former? Maybe the editors of *Time* actually believe that conservatives are against civil rights (not true) and that conventional civil rights advocates live in some netherworld beyond politics and cannot be politically classified (hardly true either). Or maybe they have unconsciously absorbed these propositions and are unaware of their influence upon their work. Or maybe they were just trying to get the word "conservative" into the copy as often as possible in order to fit the story line that a conservative Court was "chipping away at civil rights." Whatever, the labeling was unintelligent.

• ***The Missed Story.*** The Court's civil rights decisions precipitated lots of stories and analyses about how the Supreme Court was now clearly, finally, a conservative Court. I won't argue with that; the addition of Justice Anthony Kennedy made a difference in civil rights as well as in other areas. But almost as important as Kennedy to the Court's decisions was Reynolds, who served as head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division from 1981 until December 1988.

It was Reynolds who framed the legal issues involving civil rights and forced the federal courts to deal with them. Reynolds had help from various deputies over the years, as well as other senior Justice Department officials, but he was the one constant force. And his tenure, producing important results even after his departure, proves the importance of purpose in office. And also duration. Reynolds, it bears noting, could have left much earlier, say in 1985, when his promotion to associate

Terry Eastland is resident scholar at the National Legal Center for the Public Interest in Washington, D.C. He is writing a book about the lessons for conservative government to be drawn from the Reagan and Bush years.

STILL THE LAW OF THE LAND?
ESSAYS ON CHANGING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION



A damning indictment of how the Supreme Court has bypassed the U.S. Constitution and the amendment process in its zeal for social engineering. Contributors are: J. Clifford Wallace, Edward J. Erler, Lino A. Graglia, Edwin Meese III, Stephen J. Markman, Charles E. Rice, Glen E. Thurow, and Avi Nelson.

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attorney general was denied by the Senate Judiciary Committee. Had he not stayed on, one could imagine a less purposeful successor, or even one of a much different mind, with all that might have followed.

With the exception of Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page, no one picked up on the Reynolds story. *U.S. News & World Report* ran a headline, "Are You Smiling Robert Bork?", the point of which was that Bork should be smiling at the work of Kennedy, whom President Reagan appointed after the Senate voted Bork down. I don't know whether Bork was smiling or not, but I saw Reynolds soon after the civil rights decisions were rendered, and I can verify that he was.

• ***Hysteria.*** There was lots and lots of this in the wake of the Court's rulings, first in news accounts and then in editorials and columns. "Civil Rights Leaders Attack Court's Decisions," said the headline atop a "reaction" story in the June 13 *New York Times*. So they did. "Night has fallen on the Court as far as civil rights are concerned," said Benjamin L. Hooks of the NAACP. The Court is "hiding racism under a cloak of legalism," said the Rev. Joseph E. Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

"Reaction" stories of this kind show just how skilled the "civil rights leaders" are at getting their point of view, quickly and clearly, into the nation's most influential media. They also illustrate just how one-sided such stories can be. Joining Hooks and Lowery in the *Times*'s story were three other "civil rights leaders," making five altogether—five individuals who have more than equal access to the mainstream media. Alone on the other side in this particular story was one of the plaintiffs in the case at issue, a white firefighter from Birmingham, Alabama. Suffice to say, this guy isn't a regular on the talk shows.

As night follows day, the hysteria then showed up in the editorials and columns of the newspapers and magazines read especially by folks in Washington. The *New York Times* accused the Court of "icy indifference to the hopes of discrimination victims," and *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen went so far as to say that the Court had brought to an end "the Second Reconstruction." In the media organs known in Washington, there were few contrary voices, not to mention calmer ones, another indication of the one-sided nature of the civil rights "debate" inside the Beltway.

One of those contrarians was Abigail Thernstrom, writing in the July 31 *New Republic*. Thernstrom made the obvious point that we're not back to 1877 (the end of Reconstruction) or even to 1960, that there's a lot of legally uncoerced affirmative action around, and that it's here to stay. Furthermore, consider her summary of where the Court is, as of July 1989:

> The Court remains firmly committed to providing remedies for discrimination. But it wants minority set-asides narrowly designed to address proven past discrimination; it doesn't like racial quotas; it doesn't believe a statistical imbalance between whites and blacks in a particular job category proves discrimination; and it prefers not to read statutes as imaginatively as civil rights lawyers might like. The Court wants plaintiffs who charge discrimination to prove it. And it believes that white workers who have been adversely affected by a court-approved affirmative action plan can attack that judicial settlement.

That was a pretty accurate summary, and if it were put this way to the American people, there would hardly be cause for alarm. But don't count on it happening. The civil rights lobbyists know how to punch the big media buttons; they want "corrective" legislation, and if you're against it, in their view, you're against civil rights. Twice in this decade they've been able to prevail with this approach (1982, in response to a

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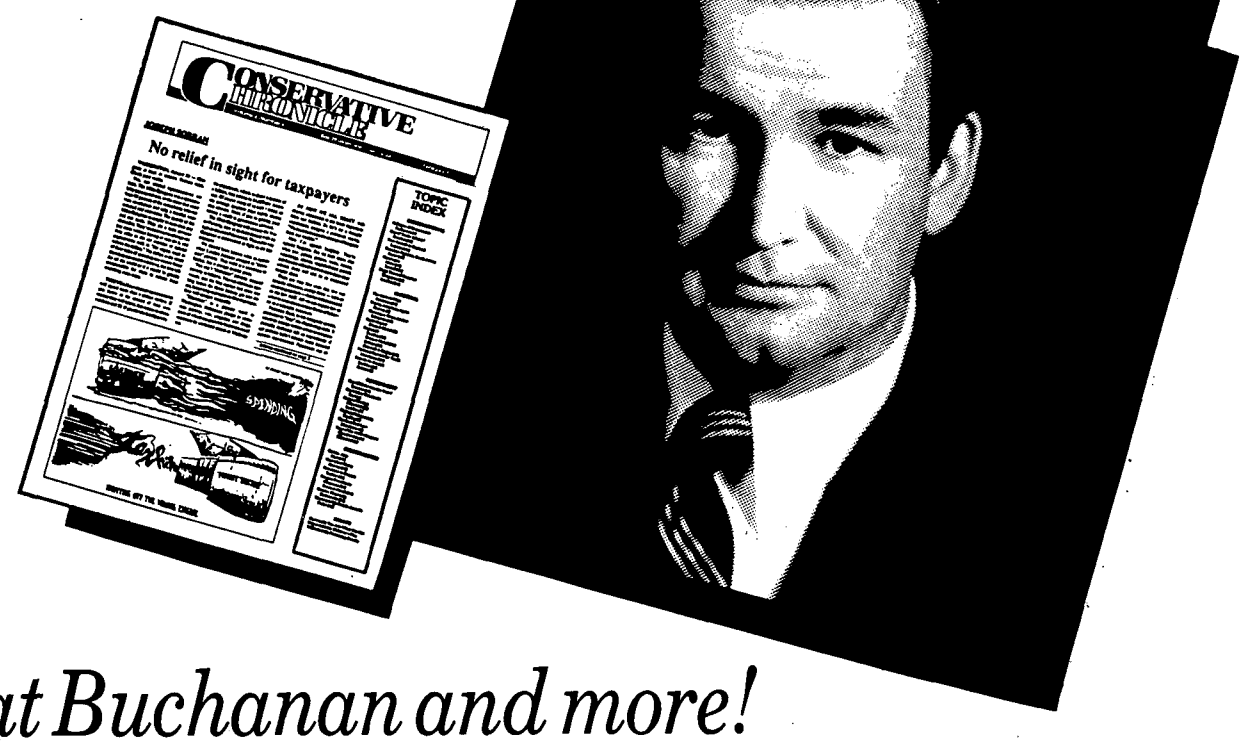

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voting rights decision of 1980; and in 1988, in response to the *Grove City* decision of 1984). I wouldn't count them out this time, unless their legislative patrons are forced to deal with "numerical goals" and the like, which Congress has left all these years to the judiciary. So expect more talk about the "night falling" and the Second Reconstruction, and more editorials and columns wailing about the state of civil rights in America.

• • •

Finally, I shouldn't leave the subject of civil rights without commending a front-page story in the June 27 *Wall Street Journal*. "Rarely heard," wrote staff reporter Sonia L. Nazario, "are the voices of those who actually have been hired or promoted under an affirmative action plan." Right she is, and her story records those rarely heard voices.

Some were ambivalent about affirmative action, liking it because it had opened doors, disliking it because it had encouraged skepticism about their talents. And others had come to reject the whole idea of race preference.

"I don't know if promoting someone because they are Chinese is the way to do it," one Chinese American promoted for that reason told Nazario. A black professor of English said that affirmative action "robs us of our dignity" and encourages the idea "that somehow color, not hard work, can bring us advancements." This professor, reported Nazario, is no longer applying for affirmative-action-related research grants. Nazario also quoted a Hispanic American as saying that affirmative action is "a handout."

And she related the story of a Miami firefighter, a Hispanic, who decided to submit to the same promotion standards as all non-minorities. Under the fire department's affirmative action program, he could have become a lieutenant six years ago, but didn't, instead deciding to wait three years until he had the seniority and test scores to qualify under normal procedures. "It was a self-pride thing," he told Nazario. "I knew I could make it on my own." He did, and now he plans to try for fire chief, a job he'll take only if he earns it on the usual terms. "I will stick to merit," he said.

Good story—good because it got beyond the law and policy debates inside Washington and found out what was in the hearts and minds of those in whose behalf the organized civil rights types claim to speak. Perhaps it says something that Nazario works out of the *Journal*'s Los Angeles office. There may be smog out there, but it's not the civil rights smog manufactured in Washington. □

EMINENTOES

GOLD DIGGERS OF '89

by Joe Queenan

When environmental activist Joao Alcazar Montez was murdered in the foothills of the Andes last spring, the killing set off a veritable gold rush among book publishers and motion picture studios. No fewer than nine companies have bid for the film rights to his life story, while an even dozen authors have contracted to write books about the labor organizer's brutal demise. Thus, the shocking news that Montez managed to survive the attack and has now come out of hiding has raised profound political, moral, and film-distribution questions.

The facts are these: on April 3, 1989, Montez was felled by fourteen shotgun blasts, believed to have been fired by local security forces. His body was then dumped into a crocodile pit. The murder instantly transformed him into an international symbol of ecological spunk, while spawning a cottage industry of publishers and movie studios vying for the rights to the Montez story.

"I am holding nine offers for the movie rights to Joao's story, seven of them for $3 million or more," says Jorge Mindao, head of the Joao Alcazar Montez Foundation, a confederation of ecologists, peasants, and aspiring West Ecuadoran screenwriters. "Joao's reappearance throws a monkey wrench into everything."

Before Montez miraculously crawled out of the crocodile pit, the foundation had been seriously negotiating with such groups as The Recovery Channel, the American cable network; Jon Peters, who co-produced "Peter O'Toole: Live in Rwanda" and "High Plains Mandrill"; Carnesca-Vitale-Massimino-Valvano, a topflight Italian production company; and The Stinger, lead singer and bassist of the rock group B-2.

Simultaneously, twelve publishing houses were awarding book contracts for as much as $2 million to big-name

authors. Montez biographies slated to appear this fall will bear such names as Garcia Gabriel Marquees, Gunter Green, Irving Shawn, Maria Llama, Graham Grass, Herman Wallace, Garcia y Vega Pinto, Jonathan ("The Living Seagull") Wouk, and Alexander Burncock. The status of these projects has now been cast into doubt by the miraculous resurrection of the labor organizer.

"Of course we're all glad to see Joao Montez back among the living," says one author. "But if I'd had any inkling that he was going to come back from the dead like this, I would have signed to do that Israeli bus hijacking instead."

Another author is more sanguine.

"I've already written a hundred pages, but I don't view this as a waste of time, because eventually the security forces will come back and murder Montez properly, and this stuff will still be fresh," he explains. "Besides, I'm only up to the part where he sees his mother raped and murdered at age 12 anyway."

But others are not so kindly disposed.

"If Montez didn't buy the farm right off the bat, it was his duty to haul himself out of that croc pit and get to a Reuters wire as soon as he could," seethes Sid Beck, chairman of Vishnu Productions. "Because of his dilly-dallying, a lot of very fine talent is going to be twiddling it or their thumbs this fall."

Brock Griffin, chairman of ITN Productions, shares Beck's anger.

"We've lined up $53 million in funding and got some of the best people in the business talking to us about this property," fumes Griffin. "We're talking Streisand, Minnelli, River Phoenix. With Montez back in the picture, we're seriously suing the foundation for *falsa desaparecido*."

Falsa desaparecido, the act of deliberately "disappearing oneself" to avoid death or taxes, is punishable by five years in prison in the foothills of the Andes, where the tawny *puna* mixes with the rich *ichu* loam. But one person thinks this punishment is too severe.

"In the broader philosophical sense, Joao Alcazar Montez is already dead," reasons The Stinger, who covets the role of the union leader. "In our hearts, we know that the crocodiles ate him. In the world of truth, he is no more; he lives on only in the cold world of raw data. So I say: let's make the movie."

"I'm sorry for all the trouble I have caused," says Montez, who has now gone into hiding because of numerous death threats from European publishing houses. "If I could do it all over again, I would probably stay dead. But the crocs simply weren't very hungry that afternoon." □

Joe Queenan is a senior editor for Forbes.

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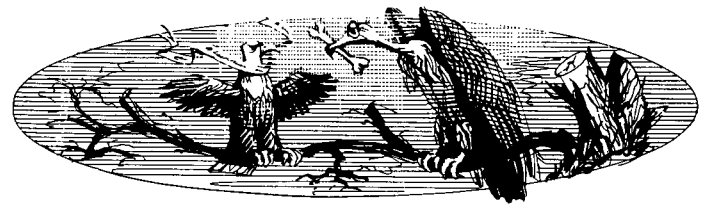

FOUR FOR BASEBALL'S GOOD OLD DAYS*

by Victor Gold

Status-seeking journalists once rose from sportswriting to covering world affairs. Heywood Broun and Westbrook Pegler come to mind, along with Robert Ruark who, having antagonized every hot-headed baseball player in the American League, was upgraded by his editors to the relative safety of writing about bistros and African safaris.

David Halberstam, who made his reputation covering the Vietnam war for the *New York Times* in the 1960s and '70s, has reversed the process. What this says about the trivialization of global coverage and the exaltation of sports coverage in modern American journalism is best left to future historians; suffice it to note that for even a furrow-browed, deadly serious reporter like Halberstam, books about Washington shakers-and-movers (*The Best and the Brightest*) and the Supermedia establishment (*The Powers That Be*) are a thing of the past. What interests him now is sports. In *The Amateurs*, he wrote about Olympic sculling; in *The Breaks of the Game*, about pro basketball; and in his latest, *Summer of '49*, about the memorable pennant race between the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox that took place forty years ago.

Memorable to whom? Please, don't press the point. It is a sore one with this reviewer—the business of New York's hegemony in the baseball publishing world—as readers of these pages may remember from my irrational spasm two years ago over the cascade of books then appearing by and about the New York Mets.[1]

The Mets, as we are constantly reminded by the New York Ministry of Sports Propaganda and Enlightenment, won the World Series in 1986, a press-shattering event that produced a dozen tomes by such literary lions as Lenny Dykstra and Gary Carter (poor Lenny, traded this year to Philadelphia where, unless there is another book in him about his New York playing days, he will never again hold an autograph party at Dalton's). The following season, 1987, the Minnesota Twins won the Series; then, last year, the Los Angeles Dodgers. If anyone outside the Twin Cities area can name a book by a Minnesota player that came out of the '87 Series, I'll eat a season's supply of Davey Johnson's TV Rolaids. As for the Dodgers, yes, their championship did produce *a* book, by Orel Hershiser; though now that their second baseman, Steve Sax, has signed on as a free agent with the Yankees, I imagine we'll soon get a load of his memoirs.

For some, you see, it's the Trilateral Plot that raises paranoid hackles; for others, the Triborough Plot. Does anyone *really* believe that if Roger Kahn's *Boys of Summer* had been St. Louis Cardinals rather than Brooklyn Dodgers, his book would be considered a baseball classic? Or that if Douglas Wallop had titled his fiction *The Year the Senators Won the Pennant* rather than *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant*, it would have gone into a second printing, much less become a Broadway musical? Or that if David Halberstam, at age five, had lived in Shaker Heights rather than the Bronx, and grown up to be an Indian fan rather than a Yankee fan, he could have persuaded a New York editor that the saga of Cleveland winning the American League pennant in the summer of '48 would make a good read?

NEW YORK EDITOR: *Say what? The Cleveland Indians . . . 1948? You gotta be kidding.*

HALBERSTAM: *But they had Bob Feller, Early Wynn, Lou Boudreau—*

NEW YORK EDITOR: *Never heard of 'em.*

In fairness—outlander's paranoia aside—Halberstam has written a very good baseball book about the good old days, one rich with fresh material and insights into some of the game's heroes. That Ted Williams was a cocky kid everyone knew, but for some reason (probably a New York sportswriters' cover-up), the news that young Joe DiMaggio was anything but a self-effacing prodigy never reached the boondocks. Yet, as Halberstam reveals, DiMaggio owned his full share of arrogance, not to say petulance, having the incredible chutzpah to hold out, at the beginning of his third season, for $40,000, when the Yankee front office had generously offered him a contract

*Summer of '49, by David Halberstam. William Morrow, $21.95; *Streak: Joe DiMaggio and the Summer of '41*, by Michael Seidel. Penguin, $7.95; *Casey on the Loose*, by Frank Deford. Viking, $15.95; *The Diamond Appraised*, by Craig R. Wright and Tom House. Simon and Schuster, $19.95.

[1] "Nine for Baseball," *TAS*, September 1987.

Victor Gold is The American Spectator*'s national correspondent.*

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for $25,000. In the end, it goes without saying, the front office had its way, with DiMaggio reporting in and Colonel Ruppert, the team owner, saying (Steinbrenner-like?), "I hope the young man has learned his lesson."

As for any comparison between DiMaggio and Williams, the big hitmen in the Red Sox-Yankee shoot-out of 1949, Halberstam writes:

> Williams intellectualized the game far more than DiMaggio did. This is not to diminish DiMaggio's own considerable powers of analysis, but a moment would come when he simply *played*. Williams never stopped thinking, analyzing. This methodological difference led to some practical differences. . . . Williams would never, no matter what the situation, go for a pitch that was even a shade outside the strike zone. DiMaggio . . . believed that, as a power hitter on the team, he sometimes had an obligation to swing at imperfect pitches . . .

DiMaggio hit .346 during the '49 season, with a mere fourteen home runs and sixty-seven RBIs. Williams hit .343, with forty-three homers and 159 RBIs. Both players were by that time in the late summer of their careers; but eight seasons earlier, in the summer preceding America's entry into World War II, the DiMaggio-Williams rivalry was just gearing up.

• • •

"Whatever else marked the year," writes Michael Seidel in *Streak*, "the 1941 baseball season would belong to a 22-year-old in his sixth year with the Yankees. During spring training [New York manager] Joe McCarthy heard some minor leaguers working at the Yankee camp talking about hitters. One youngster ventured, 'Everybody's got a weakness somewhere—I've just got to figure out where.' 'There are two fellows in the bigs who don't,' said McCarthy, 'DiMaggio and Ted Williams. They hit anything . . .' "

In the summer of '41, the Yankee Clipper and the Splendid Splinter—to borrow the sportswriting jargon of the time—proved the wisdom of McCarthy's remark, each in his own style. They hit not just anything, but damned near everything, Williams batting .406 and DiMaggio .357. But though fifty points shy in average, the season was of course DiMaggio's, for as Seidel puts it:

> Baseball offered the land a good deal to remember in 1941: the drive of Ted Williams toward the .400 barrier, the approach of the immortal Lefty Grove toward his 300th victory, the Yankees' team consecutive-game home-run record . . . the dramatic . . . race between the Dodgers and the Cardinals for the National League pennant, and finally, a moment of infamy in October—Mickey Owen's passed ball in the fourth game of the '41 World Series. But DiMaggio's legendary 56-game streak will always remain the season's crowning achievement.

And for that matter, until Nolan Ryan at the age of fifty-five pitches his twelfth no-hitter, the game's crowning achievement. First published in 1988, Seidel's journal of DiMaggio's awesome feat, now out in softback, goes hand-in-glove with Halberstam's book, evoking as it does not simply memories of the season it covers but the texture of the time; though the paranoid outlander wonders whether, if the Clipper had played for Boston and the Splinter for the Yankees, the paragraph might not begin and end: "Baseball offered the land a great deal to remember in 1941: the drive of Joe DiMaggio to break Willie Keeler's consecutive-hitting streak, the approach of the immortal Lefty Grove toward his 300th victory. . . . But Williams's legendary breaking the .400 barrier, the last major leaguer to do so, will always remain the season's crowning achievement."

• • •

Then, of course, there were the good old days *before* the good old days, the early baseball epoch that featured the player reputed to be the greatest hitter of them all, Timothy F. X. Casey, immortalized by Ernest L. Thayer's poetic report of the Mudville-Lynn game of June 2, 1888. Thayer's dispatch to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, titled "Casey at the Bat," was published the following day. It remains, a full century later, the single most memorable report of a baseball game in the history of the sport, touching as it does the essence of fandom and the ephemeral nature of fame-and-fortune in the national pastime.

What indeed happened to Casey that day he went down swinging, bottom of the ninth, with the winning runs on base and his Mudville fans stunned by the improbability of it all? Could the game have been fixed, with Casey-the-hero, like Shoeless Joe Jackson three decades later, on the take? Until now we had only to speculate since, no New York team being involved, the question was hardly considered worth the time of big league reporters. (Indeed, other than the fact that *New York* gamblers were involved, the Black Sox scandal of 1919 might have passed unnoticed.) Thanks to Frank Deford, however, the full story of Tim Casey's rise-and-fall, and what happened to him afterward, is uncovered in *Casey on the Loose*, a sprightly 106-page book, complete with photographs, and an aged Casey's dying words in 1941, when informed by his grandson that "the Indians got DiMaggio out tonight. So his streak ends at fifty-six in a row." Replied Casey: "Well, if the boy's any good, he'll get over it."

• • •

Finally, there is *The Diamond Appraised*, co-authored by Craig Wright, a baseball stat expert, and Tom House, pitching coach for the Texas Rangers. Forget the early-chapter folderol about the science of "sabermetrics," this is one of the most evocative, provocative baseball books a fan could ask for, taking on such unanswerable barroom questions as *Who was the better hitter, DiMaggio or Williams?* and even, *How would players of the good old days, like Ruth, Gehrig, Cobb, have matched up with the artificial turf and day-night challenges of the*

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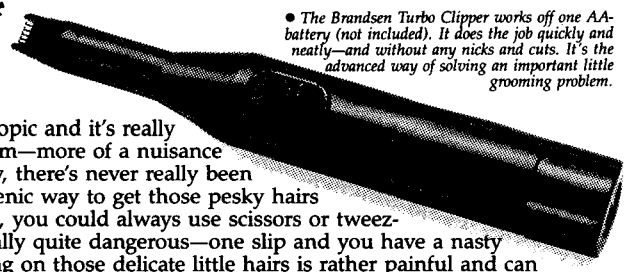

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modern game? Not to mention, the question-of-questions, *Who was the greatest ballplayer—not simply hitter—of all time?*

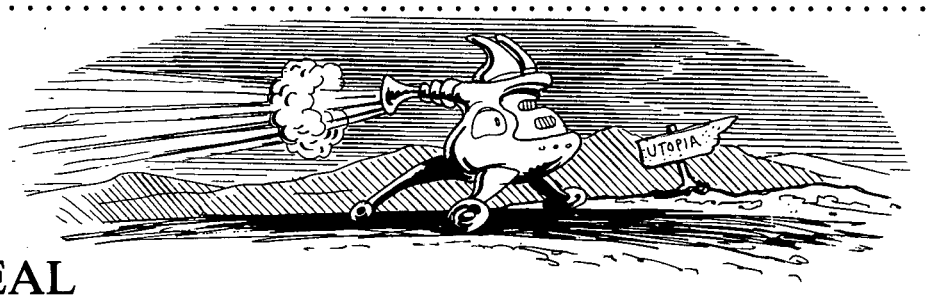
Wright-House, with the relentless logic of baseball stat-historians, claim to have the answer to that one—a player with "the speed and daring of Rickey Henderson, the arm of Roberto Clemente, the bat of Ty Cobb, the power of Babe Ruth, the glove of Ozzie Smith, and the character of Lou Gehrig."

"His name," they tell us, "was John Peter Wagner. He played from 1897 to 1917, and if there was something he couldn't do on the diamond, they never found out what it was." According to Wright-House, no less an authority than Branch Rickey, the shrewdest appraiser of baseball talent who ever lived, called the man the most valuable player in the history of the game, and John McGraw, the leading manager of his day, said he was "the nearest thing to a perfect player, no matter where his manager chose to play him."

So with all of this going for him, how is it that in 1982, when *Sports Illustrated* ran a piece on the ten greatest fielders at his position (shortstop), this "perfect player" wasn't even on the list? Craig Wright and Tom House, for all their empirical data, fumble for an answer but don't quite come up with it. They are mystified by the "failure to preserve the memory of a man uniquely suited to capture all that is good in the game."

Not me. I'm not mystified at all. Given Branch Rickey's appraisal that he was better than Ruth, Gehrig, and DiMaggio, if John Peter Wagner had had the good fortune to spend his prime playing years with the New York Yankees instead of the Pittsburgh Pirates, you can bet your Cracker Jacks that the stadium in the Bronx would have been built a decade earlier and crowned with the name "The House that Honus Built." □

THE CALIFORNIA SPECTATOR



LET'S RAKE A DEAL

by Benjamin J. Stein

Here, verbatim to the extent that I remember it, is the conversation that changed law, economics, and personal relationships. It took place in early June of 1989, and gave birth to the revolutionary concepts of "reverse bankruptcy" and "fraternal equalization rescission."

On that morning, I, who live in Los Angeles, called my friend and college classmate of long ago, Larry Lissitzyn, who practices law in Hartford, Connecticut. I, for myself, am a former lawyer and now a world famous actor and commentator on law and economics here in Sunny Cal.

"Larry," I said, "I'm losing my mind. We're having a huge housing boom here in L.A. Huge. Enormous. Prices are going up like crazy. Every day. I found a house here in Malibu that I'd like to buy, but it's a little too steep for me."

"That's the way it is for everyone these days," says Counselor Larry.

"See," I said, "if I buy it, I'll have to worry about huge, scary mortgage payments. But if I don't buy it, then it'll probably go up tremendously in value, and in two years I'll drive by it and it'll be twice as much money. You see the problem. I'll just go crazy with frustration if I don't buy it and it doubles in price."

My friend and *consiglieri* laughed confidently. "Ben," he said, "don't buy it. Then, if it goes up rapidly, if it goes up incredibly, sue for reverse bankruptcy."

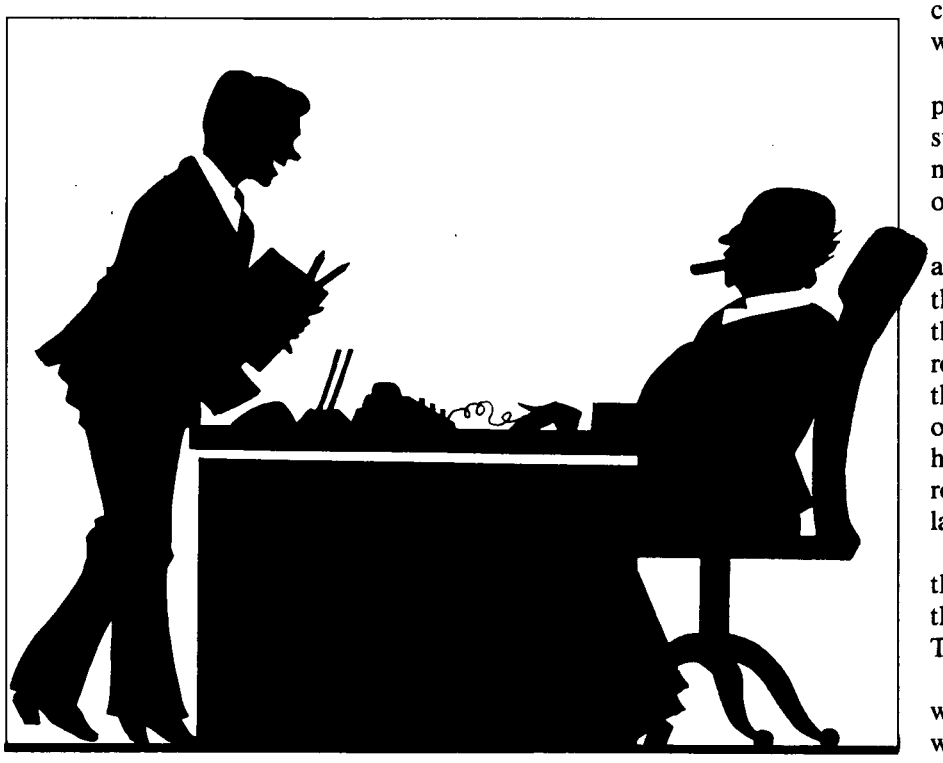
"Reverse bankruptcy?" I asked. "What's reverse bankruptcy?"

"It's a concept, a cause of action I've been toying with," he said. "In reverse bankruptcy if you did not do a deal that would have turned out incredibly well for you, you sue and get the deal reinstated as it would have been if you had originally done it. If you win your suit, and show that you are truly suffering, and had good and reasonable causes for not doing the deal, but then the deal would have worked out well, the court orders damages from the person who did do the deal, which are paid to you."

"It's brilliant," I said, reeling from the audacity of it. "In bankruptcy, you get to avoid the adverse emotional and financial consequences of doing a deal. In reverse bankruptcy, you get to reverse the adverse financial and emotional consequences of avoiding the deal. There is a basic, perfect, legal, and moral symmetry in the two causes of action."

"And with the recognition by the law that pain and enjoyment are legally cognizable, quantifiable elements of injury, surely there cannot be an injury as grave as not doing a deal that turned out well without a legal redress. 'No injury without an action' is a maxim of the common law.

"The real truth," Larry went on, "is that it's shameful that a cause of action recognizing the hurt of seeing great profits in deals you might have done but didn't has gone unrecognized for so long. Think of what a mess we would be in without bankruptcy, which basically allows people to do the same thing."



"I totally agree," I said. "But then should there not also be a cause of action in which if a friend or relative does a deal or makes an investment which turns out incredibly well, and if that causes you complete jealousy and hurt, then you can sue to rescind that deal?"

"Of course," Larry said after a moment's thought and analysis of the precedents. "Clearly, your relative or friend would not be allowed to drive his car into your living room window, would he?"

"Certainly not," I said. "And yet the pain of seeing your relative or friend succeed wildly beyond your level is far more excruciating than the replacement of broken glass.

"Moreover, the precedent of having a legal cause of action which recognizes the need for equality of results rather than equality of opportunity has already been endorsed by Congress in Title VII and Title VIII and in a number of other laws about contracting and hiring. Clearly 'fraternal equalization rescission' is in the same line of legislative and judicial precedent."

"Benjy," my friend Larry said over the long-distance wire, "this could be the start of a beautiful friendship." Then he hung up.

I threw my bottle of Blackstone water into the waste paper basket and walked toward the courthouse. □

Benjamin J. Stein is a writer and producer living in Hollywood.

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IN WOODY'S SHADOW

by Bruce Bawer

You might call *Parenthood* a middle-class, Midwestern variation on Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters*. Like *Hannah*, it's a family portrait—an alternately funny and poignant story of the ups and downs, over a period of a couple of years, in the life of an extended American family of the '80s. But whereas Allen gave us a colorful Manhattan clan composed largely of art-world and show-biz types, director Ron Howard and writers Lowell Ganz and Babaloo (yes, Babaloo) Mandel give us a seemingly more ordinary St. Louis family called the Buckmans. And whereas Allen focused on love and romance—both within and outside of marriage—Howard's emphasis is on parents and their children.

Indeed, the Buckmans have so many parent-child problems to deal with that you may need a scorecard to keep it all straight. Try to follow this: businessman Gil (Steve Martin) and his wife, Karen (Mary Steenburgen), have three kids, including a nine-year-old son, Kevin, who's so high-strung that he needs psychiatric treatment. Gil's divorced sister (Dianne Wiest) is the mother of two troubled youths—an intractable pubescent named Gary, who rents porno movies and keeps a padlock on his bedroom door, and a bright high-schooler named Julie (Martha Plimpton) who insists on consorting with an immature lad named Tod (Keanu Reeves). Meanwhile, Gil's younger sister, a schoolteacher named Susan, has an overzealous Yuppie husband, Nathan (Rick Moranis), who insists on teaching advanced subjects to their toddler daughter, Patty, so that she'll gain a competitive edge on her future classmates.

Got that? There's more. Gil's a loving and attentive father, you see, and it's largely because he's always wanted very much to be a better dad than his own father (Jason Robards, Jr.) was. Not that Buckman *père* wasn't a decent guy; it's just that he's a fun-loving type who never got the hang of fatherhood. Besides, he's always found Gil a bit of a square; he prefers younger son Larry (Tom Hulce), an ever-broke, never-employed nomad who's fond of get-rich-quick schemes and who, after several years' absence, shows up at a family gathering with a seven-year-old mulatto son named Cool. Add to this Gil's mom, his grandma, and assorted others, and it's amazing that you can even remember who's who, let alone care about any of them.

But you *do* care about them—some of them, anyway. The acting has a lot to do with it. Steve Martin, in particular, is remarkable—hilarious one moment, tender the next, and always consistent, credible, and perfectly modulated. Watching him agonize so convincingly over his son's emotional problems makes it hard to believe that this is the man who used to dance on "Saturday Night Live" with an arrow through his head. Yet his performance suggests that, however serious an actor he becomes, he'll never make the mistake of entirely submerging his comic self, the way Mary Tyler Moore and Carol Burnett seem to think they have to do when giving Serious Performances; indeed, at certain points in *Parenthood*, Martin makes excellent and altogether fitting raids on his comic bag of tricks.

Wiest is splendid too, as ever, though she sometimes seems to be reprising her role in *Hannah and Her Sisters*; loveless, stubborn, and neurotic, her character here is as touchingly sincere and as comically maladroit at motherhood as her counterpart in *Hannah* was at relationships. Steenburgen and Reeves (who appeared previously in *River's Edge*) are also especially fine; and the boy who plays Kevin—a big and difficult role, which calls for all sorts of pathetic displays and mood shifts—doesn't make a false move. It's the sort of performance that only a very sensitive director could get out of a kid (and doubtless Howard's own experience as a child actor made a difference here, too).

Indeed, the acting is so marvelously effective, on the whole, that it takes a while to realize how bogus the whole thing is. I mean, this is a big family composed almost entirely of *really nice people*. They have very lovely homes, good jobs, and plenty of time for the kids. They have problems, yes, but they're not *terrible* problems—no terminal illnesses, no teenagers hooked on crack—and virtually all are resolved by the end of the movie, in some cases quite improbably. As for Larry, the solitary exception to the rule of family niceness, he's a classic black sheep, a stereotype in every way (and a too-neat contrast to Gil), whose continuing ability to charm the pants off his dad isn't quite believable.

For all this, the film's a hell of a lot less synthetic-feeling than, say, *Terms of Endearment*. And if it's contrived in its broad outlines, it's authentic in many of its particulars. The one really staggering misstep comes at the very ending, which is set in a maternity ward, and which is so inanely, gratuitously sentimental that it would make Frank Capra wince. It's one of those *ending* endings, which ties up too many story lines too quickly, too glibly, and too improbably for comfort; and the picture that it offers of perfect family harmony and of difficulties overcome by love and patience contradicts the whole point of the movie—namely, that family life is by its nature fraught with predicaments which have no easy solutions.

This is, to be sure, a hard sort of film to find an ending for: it's a character piece, crowded with stories but lacking in a dominant plot line, and there's no ideal, natural conclusion to such a picture. But the one Ganz and Mandel have come up with is all wrong; its unrelenting mawkishness betrays the whole tone of the film, whose saving grace is that it doesn't lean on its emotion and consistently leavens sentiment with humor. Howard and his scriptwriters could have taken a lesson from Woody Allen: compare the final moments of *Parenthood* to the closing dinner-party sequence in *Hannah* (especially the very last part, when Allen and Wiest talk before a mirror). Both sequences have similar purposes, but Allen's is wittier, subtler, and far more effective (which is to say, far more affecting). For myself, if I ever watch *Parenthood* on videotape, I'll turn the TV off after the charming and funny penultimate sequence (set at a school play), which does all the summing-up required, and which Howard would have been well advised to end with.

• • •

As for Rob Reiner, I'd advise him to shake off Woody Allen altogether. More than a decade ago—back when we all still thought of him as the Meathead on "All in the Family" (and, by the way, when Ron Howard was still Richie Cunningham on "Happy Days")—Reiner wrote, directed, and starred in one of the worst TV movies of all time. It was called *More Than Friends* and it owed a great deal to *Annie Hall*, which had come out only a year or so earlier. Reiner borrowed with great care but little understanding: he appropriated a plot point here, a detail of character there, and emphasized the

Bruce Bawer is The American Spectator*'s movie reviewer.*

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metropolitan *mise en scène* in a big way. But he seemed not to understand that these elements had no intrinsic significance, that they were just manifestations of Woody Allen's sensibility, his singular way of looking at life and love. And sensibility was precisely what *More Than Friends* lacked—that, and a feel for the New York streets on which the film was set. At its core, that early effort of Reiner's was fake, empty—a collection of meaningless gestures.

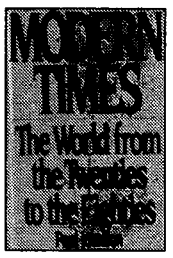
Reiner went on, of course, to make some of the most winsome movies of the past few years—the first (*This Is Spinal Tap*) a side-splitting fake "rockumentary" about a crummy rock-and-roll band on tour, the second (*Stand By Me*) a poignant story about the friendship of four pubescent small-town boys, the third (*The Princess Bride*) a charming comedy-fantasy about storybook lovers, villains, and pirates. No other new director of this decade has created a more solid and respectable body of work; at a time when even better-than-average Hollywood movies often have a slick assembly-line style and point of view, his films have an uncommon quality of character, wit, and gentleness, a pronounced and distinctive humanity. Like Howard, moreover (and like his ex-wife and *More Than Friends* co-star Penny Marshall, who directed last year's *Big*), Reiner has proven himself especially good with children; he seems to respect them, to care about them, to understand the way their minds operate.

But how is he with adults? *When Harry Met Sally . . .* is Reiner's first feature film that's exclusively for and about grown-ups, and it doesn't say much for Reiner's abilities in this line. On the contrary, it demonstrates that Reiner still has a thing for Woody Allen, that his view of adult relationships is no more sophisticated than it was when he made *More Than Friends*, and that he might be better off sticking to kid stories.

Either that, or developing an interest in adults who act more like adults. For Harry Burns (Billy Crystal), the hero of Reiner's new film, is the most juvenile of men. He's the sort whose life with males revolves around sports and whose life with females revolves around sex; who believes firmly that what every man thinks, after intercourse, is "How long do I have to lie here and hold her before I can get up and go home?"; who is constantly turning to his girlfriend and saying things like "I had a dream—we're making love and the Olympic judges are watching"; and who informs her that "there are two kinds of women, high maintenance and low maintenance," and that she's the former.

Yech! The idea here, obviously, is that Harry's supposed to be obnoxious yet brashly appealing. As it works out, however, he's just obnoxious. And yet the very pretty and fastidious Sally Albright (Meg Ryan), who meets him three times over the course of ten years and who at first finds him unbearable, ends up head over heels. Go figure. You'd bet your life that a man wrote this script—a man very much like Harry, naturally. But you'd be wrong: it's by Nora Ephron, the author of *Heartburn* and ex-wife of Carl Bernstein. Could a woman really have created such an odious romantic hero? It seems incredible. Yet think about it for a minute, and it begins to make sense: any woman who married Carl Bernstein *would* find Harry Burns appealing.

Besides, Ephron didn't work alone. Reiner reportedly had a big hand in shaping the script; the story of Harry and Sally is said to be based on his experiences after divorcing Penny Marshall, and Ephron felt the character was so close to Reiner that he should play the role himself. It was Reiner, too, who hatched the film's jejune thesis, which is stated by Harry early on: "Men and women can never be friends because



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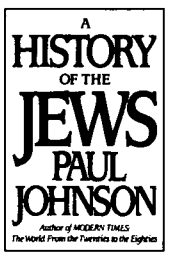

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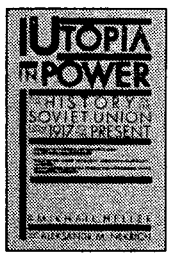

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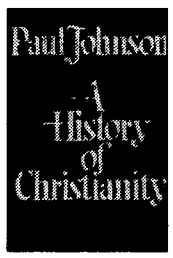

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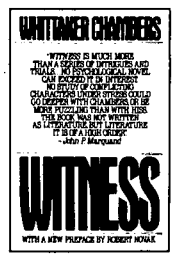

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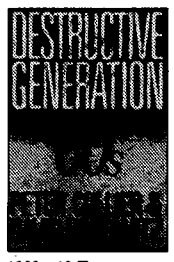

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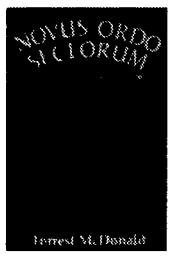

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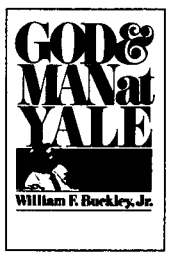

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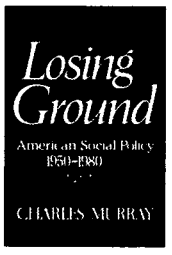

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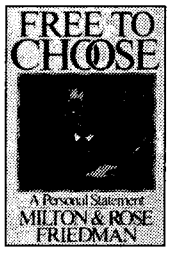

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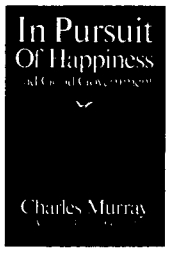

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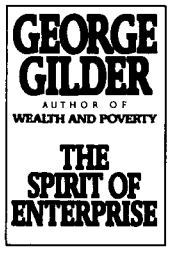

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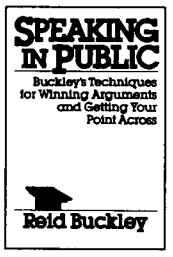

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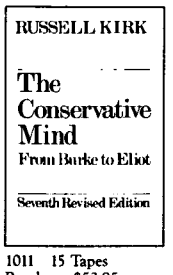

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the sex part always gets in the way." (When you see a proposition like this being taken seriously by a scriptwriter, you know you're in trouble.) This thesis notwithstanding, however, Harry and Sally *do* become friends after meeting for the third time. ("Great!" Harry says with his usual charm. "A woman friend!") But you don't buy it for a minute: there's not enough chemistry between these two to make a friendship seem likely, let alone a love affair.

The whole contraption, in fact, feels synthetic. We're told that Harry's a political consultant and that Sally's a *Daily News* reporter, but we don't see either of them at work. They don't even *talk* about work. (For all the difference that it makes, he might be a construction foreman and she a ballerina.) We don't know anything about their families or upbringing, and their friends, ex-spouses, and other lovers are little more than stick-figure plot functionaries. Even Harry's best friend, Jess (Bruno Kirby), and Sally's best friend, Marie (Carrie Fisher), are stubbornly one-dimensional (though the actors do their best to breathe life into them). What's more, Harry and Sally have so many diametrically opposite personality traits—all of them blatantly spelled out in the film's opening scenes—that they can't possibly seem anything but false: he's passionate, she's practical; he's sloppy, she's neat (he calls her "Miss Hospital Corners"); he's into munchies, she won't eat between meals; he'll sleep with any woman that's breathing, she won't go to bed with a man she doesn't love; he thinks a lot about death, she doesn't.

Or at least he *says* he thinks a lot about death, though nothing in his behavior suggests it. That's the difference, of course, between Woody Allen and Rob Reiner: when a Woody Allen character says he thinks a lot about death, you *know* he does. When Harry says he thinks a lot about death, you know that Rob Reiner thinks a lot about Woody Allen. And does he ever! The settings here are vintage Allen: Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum, a bookstore. But the acting and dialogue are mainstream yuppie: when Sally meets Harry in Shakespeare & Co., he's in the Personal Growth section; at the museum, he hangs around the Temple of Dendur with her and does bad shtick: "I have a theory that Egyptian hieroglyphics are really an ancient comic strip about a character named Sphinxie." Ugh. Like Allen and Mariel Hemingway in *Manhattan*, they lie in bed and watch *Casablanca* together. ("Best last line of a movie ever," he says, as if it weren't the received opinion on the subject.) And toward the end of the movie, just as in *Manhattan*, our hero, suddenly realizing how much he loves our heroine, sprints across town while a bouncy Gershwin tune plays on the soundtrack, and winds up in a doorway, facing her, breathing heavily. (The difference is that whereas Allen used "Strike Up the Band" for the spirit and "But Not For Me" for the subdued follow-up, Reiner plays a weird, peppy arrangement of "But Not For Me" under the run: for anyone who knows the song, it's a disconcerting choice.)

That's not the only musical echo. The soundtrack contains several songs Allen has used: "It Had To Be You" (from *Annie Hall*), "Our Love Is Here To Stay" as well as "But Not For Me" (*Manhattan*), "Isn't It Romantic" and "Where or When" (*Hannah*). Yes, they're all wonderful songs, and, yes, it's satisfying to see a new movie whose score doesn't consist of the hideous discords of some top-40 rock group. But given the hundreds of standard ballads by Gershwin, Arlen, Rodgers, et al., to choose from, why did Reiner pick these? Certainly it wasn't a matter of their being just the right tunes for his purposes; most of them seem almost arbitrarily assigned to their respective scenes. Music is, in fact, employed quite crudely here: if, in *Hannah*, Allen delicately underlined the seasonal changes by means of music and atmospheric shots, Reiner hits us over the head with songs like "Autumn In New York" and "Winter Wonderland" and with postcard views of (among other things) the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree.

There's one further curious facet of this film that needs to be mentioned. From the opening credits, Reiner cuts to a Diane Arbus-like two-shot of an elderly couple, who face the camera and tell us how they met. (In *Annie Hall*, Allen cut from the credits to a similar close-up of himself.) They're the first of several such couples who appear at intervals in the film, all telling us similar stories. Why? Hard to say; maybe Reiner and his scriptwriter, Nora Ephron, felt this gimmick would make the story of Harry and Sally seem more real, more universal. Or maybe they were making parodic references to the intercalated bits in *Reds*, wherein a host of oldsters reminisced about the real John Reed and Louise Bryant. Or maybe Reiner is just addicted to structural clutter: he burdened *Spinal Tap* with a gratuitous introductory segment starring himself as the "rockumentary's" producer; he encumbered *Stand By Me* with an unnecessary nostalgic voice-over by Richard Dreyfuss; and he almost sank *The Princess Bride* by interpolating several action-stalling scenes in which Peter Falk—as an old man reading the story to his grandson—answered the child's comments.

Why does Reiner imitate Woody Allen so slavishly? Partly, I'm sure, for the same reason that Allen, in his weaker films (e.g., *Interiors*), goes overboard emulating Bergman; he admires the man's work. But one also has the feeling that Reiner, so comfortable in the realm of storybook fantasy, farce, and boyhood, is ill at ease in the territory of this film—adult romance—and, like a smart but un-self-confident kid copying a book report out of an encyclopedia, felt a need to lean strongly on a recognized authority. One can only hope that, in films to come, Reiner will cultivate his own distinctive manner of looking at grown-up life and love—or else will find his way back to the sort of movie he's made with such splendid proficiency in the past. □

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE CULTURE WE DESERVE

Jacques Barzun, edited by Arthur Krystal
Wesleyan University Press/185 pp. $19.95

John Simon

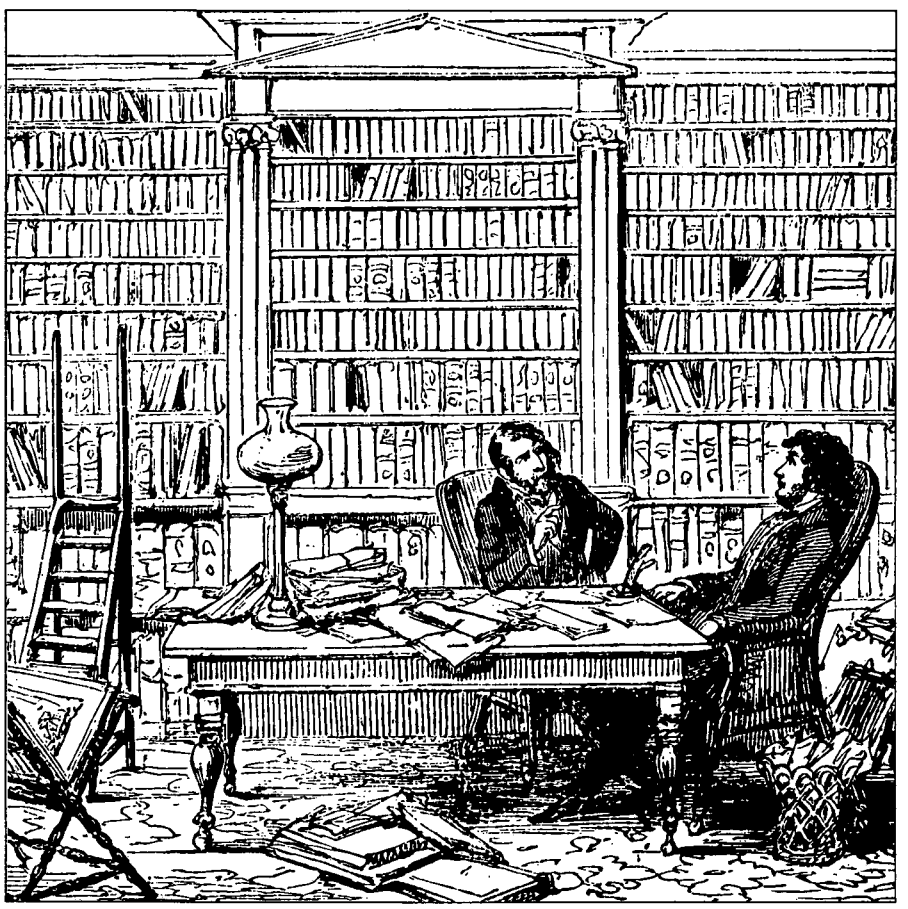
It is very hard for a reviewer to do justice to a book so fertile in ideas, so challenging, so crowded with unexpected yet relevant details as Jacques Barzun's *The Culture We Deserve*. I know I can't do it, and the only reason I took it on is to prevent its falling into the hands of someone even less qualified—someone, for example, not even aware of the daunting magnitude of the task—and so making a complete botch of it.

The Culture We Deserve comprises twelve essays on history, education, the arts, language, and what, somewhat vaguely, we are forced to call culture, even though it is these days more likely to be a turning away from it, the blatant absence of it. What happens in an essay? Someone is thinking out loud in print for the benefit of those he cannot reach with the spoken voice. So the best thing the essay can do is to combine the voice of enlightenment with a truly conversational tone. Not the kind of conversation you hear in locker rooms, at the restaurant table next to yours, or while waiting in line for a movie. But the conversation of good minds, quick wits, lively inquirers, sharp observers, and graceful stylists in the company of their peers.

Jacques Barzun is able to conduct such a conversation single-handed. We are all familiar with that superior type of interview—the lost wax method of interviewing—where the interviewer's questions are removed and the interviewee's answers form a smoothly consecutive whole addressing all your questions (which the smart interlocutor anticipated); in other words, an essay. *The Culture We Deserve* is a self-interview responding to all your queries, even the ones you were not clever enough to ask and would have kicked yourself the next morning for not having thought of. And all this in a style that is conversational but not chatty, lucid but not dry, civilized but not highfalutin. Let me give you as an example a paragraph from "Where Is History Now?":

> The nineteenth century took to history not for the good of the state, but for pleasure. We need to be reminded of this fact just as, in our study-ridden culture, we need to be reminded that works of art are for pleasure too. The pleasures of reading history are manifold: it exercises the imagination and furnishes it, discloses the nuances of the familiar within the unfamiliar, brings out the heroic in mankind side by side with the vile, tempers absolute partisanship by showing how few monsters of error there have been, and in all these ways induces a relative serenity. This composure is not to be taken for cynical indifference. Rather, it is a state of spirited pessimism like that generated by reading the great novels and epics.

Note how these sentences, good and informative as they are, all manage also to add to the sheer pleasure of reading. In the first, there is that "took to history," so much more vital than, say, "turned to" or "approached" or "espoused" or whatever a lesser writer might have chosen. In the next sentence, consider "study-ridden," so vastly superior to "scholarly" or "academic" or "research-oriented" or the like. In the next, we find "furnishes," which is the *mot juste*, and "relative serenity," which is a smart piece of understatement. But there is also the sensuously unifying assonance of *i*'s in "mankind side by side with the vile." The next sentence is perfectly straightforward, which, even without lagniappes, is not to be spurned. And in the last one there is the oxymoron "spirited pessimism," which is worth pondering.



Now let me try to summarize, however inadequately, the contents of each of the twelve essays. "Culture High and Dry" concerns the ways in which our culture has become useless: the decline of philosophy; specialism following specialization; the attempts to define culture in scientific terms, by measurement, analysis, etc.; scholarship ineptly trying to introduce young minds to the arts; the folly of continuous reassessment—of what?; and so on. What is interesting to the theoretical scholar lacks universal interest. Theory is crippling the arts; criticism is of use only insofar as it doesn't pretend to being a system, a science. Pedantry and pretentiousness must be driven from the republic of letters; the concepts "dilettante" and "amateur" must be rehabilitated. Culture, in short, is for meditation and conversation.

The next essay defines itself succinctly by its title, "The Impossible Problem: Supporting the Arts." The old attitude toward the arts changes with the Renaissance—rank and degree are now assigned to individual artists and their works. "Genius" is no longer ingenuity, but some sort of superhuman power. The artist goes from domestic and courtier to dealer-manager-advertiser of his own wares. Meanwhile the public, out of reverse snobbery, humbly submits to the new. Given the power and prestige of that calling, everyone wants to set himself up as an artist. Rioting students proclaim themselves artists; art centers spring up everywhere; universal approval is bestowed on every spark of talent. Thus subsidy of the arts becomes even more unaffordable; the only thing that would help would be deliberate discouragement, but that too is impossible.

"Look It Up! Check It Out!" concerns the new Alexandrianism, the preponderance of libraries, dictionaries, data banks—the whole fustiness of our intellectual atmosphere. Everyone, Barzun says, has become a researcher "by necessity, accident or choice." It is an "orgy of self-consciousness. We seem to live mainly in order to see how we live." An essay such as this (but really the entire book) thrives on the incidental illustrative detail, gleaned from the most astounding byways, and finished off with a witty *pointe* that fixes it inextricably in our awareness. Thus: "One recalls the large *Webster*, third edition, in which it is said that many educated Americans throughout the country use *ain't* in casual conversation. The evidence, when tracked down, was a research paper that found half a dozen such speakers somewhere in the Middle West." (Barzun, by the way, is for this usage; I ain't.) Or, better yet, take this—and note the use of the epithet *firmer*: "In one African language a woman's breast is feminine if small, masculine if large: it would be foolish to draw political conclusions. Let us reach equity for the sexes on a firmer basis."

"Where Is History Now?" deals with

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the uses and abuses of the teaching of history (a subject that, Barzun says, can only be read, not taught, even though he did teach it) and with the total ignorance of history, the teaching of which has been discontinued in thirty states without an outcry. Today's college freshman is, accordingly, a tabula rasa about history. Not a good thing; on the other hand, "whoever wants the total reality must first gain access to the mind of God."

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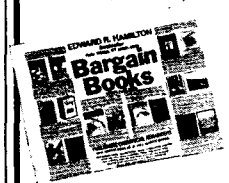

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We come next to "What Critics Are Good For," a question that probably would not be raised outside America, though I remember creating a mild stir at the Tehran Film Festival when I assured someone who couldn't believe it that I actually got paid for writing film criticism. There are many points here heart-warming for a critic, the thrust of the piece affirming the need for critics to defend one side and the other against cultural totalitarianism. But the justification for critics' being "vanishes if [critics] abandon *maieutics*—midwifery." Instead of trying to summarize the multifarious discussion, let me quote a typical juicy passage:

> After T. S. Eliot had certified that Kipling was a poet, it was no longer permissible to despise him as a journalist whose day had passed. The literati cowed by Eliot very likely did not go back to reading Kipling with fervor, but another rehabilitation did attract a new public. This return to favor was achieved by Harold Nicolson in behalf of Tennyson. By 1920, Tennyson had lost his immense fame. . . . He was one of the Victorians, and Lytton Strachey had just shown what frauds they all were. Nicolson argued his case on the principle that ethical poetry antedates Victorianism and forms the bulk of all poetry ever written. A poet, moreover, must be judged by his best work. . . . The argument proved convincing, and in due course T. S. Eliot turned his solemn gaze on Tennyson and nodded approval. Tennyson was back in the pantheon.
>
> What is worth noting . . . is that forty years later, in a second edition of Nicolson's book, the poor author had to defend himself against the charge of "cruel bias" against Tennyson. The generation of the sixties had found in Tennyson "spiritual unrest" and other endearing traits, such as his father's alcoholism, and these Nicolson had not valued properly. So the critic who singlehanded had rehabilitated the poet was now counted among his detractors. Who says that critics have things all their own way?

This is quintessential Barzun: informed, concise, elegantly understated, gloriously ironic, and not to be argued away.

In "Reckoning With Time and Place," Barzun, leaning on an essay by Lionel Trilling, defends the historical method as a necessary tool in literary and art criticism. But great criticism is finally "Impressionist," and Barzun makes delicious fun of its trendy enemies. In today's critical schools "method conquers all, and for want of it, past ages must have been lost" in bafflement. He warns against certain types of new "art" that imitate "not nature but the critics." The cultural historian must not bewail the past or advocate a return to anything whatever, but he must "compare pretension with performance so as to preserve whole and clear certain words, meanings, and standards."

There follows one of the longest pieces, "The Bugbear of Relativism," the only one that has, apparently, not been previously published in some similar form, and the only one that strikes me as unfocused, though not uninteresting for all that. It contains, among many other things, the useful definition of culture as "a network of beliefs and purposes in which any string in the net pulls and is pulled by the others, thus perpetually changing the configuration of the whole." The intent of the essay is to demolish the improper uses of the concept "Relativism," which gets blamed for anything and everything these days. The problem is that this essay tries to cover too much ground; but what breathtaking points it does make as it hurtles past us breathlessly, e.g.,: ". . . Every liberation increases the sense of oppression . . . the laws enacted to secure the rights of every person and group, by creating protective boundaries, create new barriers." Or take this: "In keeping with [the] headlong march of freedom, linguistics has proclaimed a new absolute: There is no right or wrong in language; blunders are a natural phenomenon to be respected like the tides." And again: "Plastic, the ubiquitous material, seems the perfect symbol of our state; it is at once stiff and pliable; it does not fit smoothly, but force it and it will stretch and hold—until it breaks."

With "*Exeunt* the Humanities," Barzun is forced to wonder whether we are sure we know which are the humanities. He notes that the latest studies in literature and the arts are purely technical; pleasure and meditation are pretty well excluded, yet if the humanities become "so many social and other sciences, no humanizing effect can be expected from the transaction." However, when President Eliot of Harvard, a chemist himself, instituted the elective system, whereby students were able to dabble in this and that branch of the humanities, the building of a vigorous humanistic edifice was forgotten, with equally disastrous results. As Woodrow Wilson perceived, the business of higher education became "to re-generalize each generation."

Barzun applauds this notion, as he does William James's apothegm that the aim of a college education should be, as James told some students, "to help you to know a good man when you see him." "What this comes down to," Barzun comments, "is the thing we today keep bleating about as 'the search for excellence.' If the motto is not hypocritical, it is certainly ineffectual. In higher education we give degrees that supposedly certify excellence and then require stacks of letters of recommendation in order to distinguish real merit from the rest. It has to be assumed, too, that among the letters there will be a truthful one to help us reach a sound judgment. And still not content, we also ask for figures based on so-called objective tests. In short, we cannot tell a good man when we see him." The real danger to humanism "is our present combination of specialist and half-baked humanist education," Barzun argues. We are overrun by fans and buffs, the new breed of pedants, with their barren form of knowledge. We clamor for "communication," but should demand "conversation," which is "the key out of the prison cells of our professions, our vocations, and our hobbies, and no less, of our fine arts and our scholarship."

"A Surfeit of Fine Arts" is a cogently argued case against a tabu topic: oversupply in the arts. Barzun distinguishes between what he calls domestic art and public art and sees no need for supporting the former with public monies. He holds up the Greek ideal, where one dramatic trilogy and one satyr play seen at a festival constituted the citizens' annual quota of high art. In "The Fallacy of the Single Cause," he argues against the oversimplification of history as well as of philosophy, and presents the multiple causes whose interaction is what we call history, which is a process, not a set of isolatable phenomena. "A history could be written of the weather in Marin County between any two dates, but not a history of the thunderstorms. A History of the Idea of Progress is possible and has in fact been written, whereas a History of Human Stupidity cannot be, plentiful as the source material obviously is."

"Licence to Corrupt" is one of the richest essays in the book and hence harder to summarize. It is a more detailed examination of how our education, and particularly linguistic education, has failed. The humanistic disciplines attempt to be "scientific" because of the success of the sciences, which they envy, and lose the sense of free play they require. The linguist in particular is seen as playing two roles: as a would-be scientist, he is against value judgments; as a professional, he shouts "Hands off!" at anyone else who wants to introduce concepts of right and wrong into language. Yet "language, like history, like the human mind, belongs not to science but to the realm of finesse."

Especially lopsided is the quasi-zoological, quasi-botanical notion that language is a living thing, which in truth is only a frail metaphor. For must not language then be pruned like

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a tree, tamed and gelded like a horse, forcibly modified to yield superior hybrids, doctored to put off its death? Linguists, however, boggle at such prescriptiveness, then turn around and prescribe that others should not prescribe. Politics enters into the picture: the idiocies of the National Council of Teachers of English were sixties-inspired pandering by sentimental liberalism to militant minorities. "Great care and sensitivity must be used in correcting anyone in any circumstances," the descriptive grammarians declare; "fine encouragement for removing illiteracy," Barzun counters.

Language must be viewed as "a work of art, a collective work of art, a work of collective art." But too much creative freedom is self-defeating because novelty can be felt only in relation to a perceived norm. "No one has yet explained why language alone of all human handiwork should not be tended and kept in good repair," something impossible if "the linguists, who boast of having 'no respect for words' " will have their own way: urging corruption on the masses "while they themselves continue to write in standard prose remarkable chiefly for its would-be scientific vocabulary and its inadequacy when teaching grammar to the young."

This brings us to the last, longest, most suggestively complex essay, "Toward the Twenty-First Century," in which many of the book's themes are further elaborated, refined, and extended to concepts of justice, morality, manners, politics. Barzun is chiefly concerned with showing that in our century no new schemes of society have emerged other than separatism of various kinds, which does not solve the overarching problems. In this respect, he shows the failure of both the social sciences and the arts, and also, of course, of education. He traces the many forms of general purposelessness: while there is no morality or religion to organize the world, arts and sciences are not available to all, and mere ambition or hedonism is likewise beyond the universal grasp.

Again and again Barzun demonstrates that the contemporary world has not one new idea on how to live together. But he refuses to turn into a mere *laudator temporis acti* or into a prophet of doom. I do not, however, wish to give away the ending of the book with its speculations about the future; I wouldn't do that to a novel, or to a play or a movie; why should I do it to a work in a different genre but just as suspenseful? I will say, though, that it is an open ending that will seem too pessimistic to some, too fuzzily hopeful to others. I see in it the reticent melancholy of a wise old man; the historian in him knows that there is hope, but the mortal in him knows that he will not be around to see its fruition.

The Culture We Deserve may suffer from the besetting problem of such collections: inevitable overlapping, a slight repetitiveness. But it repeats itself less than most such volumes, and when it does, it does so with a difference: fresh examples, new contexts, a widening perspective. A more serious flaw is its assumption that as a work of humanism it does not threaten the laity. It does—by asking people to think.

Every page of the book is a provocation to thought, but in the form of dialectical maieutics that would have gladdened the midwifely heart of old Socrates. During his tenure as Provost of Columbia University, Barzun once managed to elicit the ire or mockery of many of his colleagues by sending out a directive requesting the members of the faculty to set off a day for thinking—once a month, I think, it was. (Once a week would have been overoptimistic; once a year, too undemanding.) Some were incensed by the implication that on the *other* days they weren't thinking; some were cackling at the prospect of themselves and their

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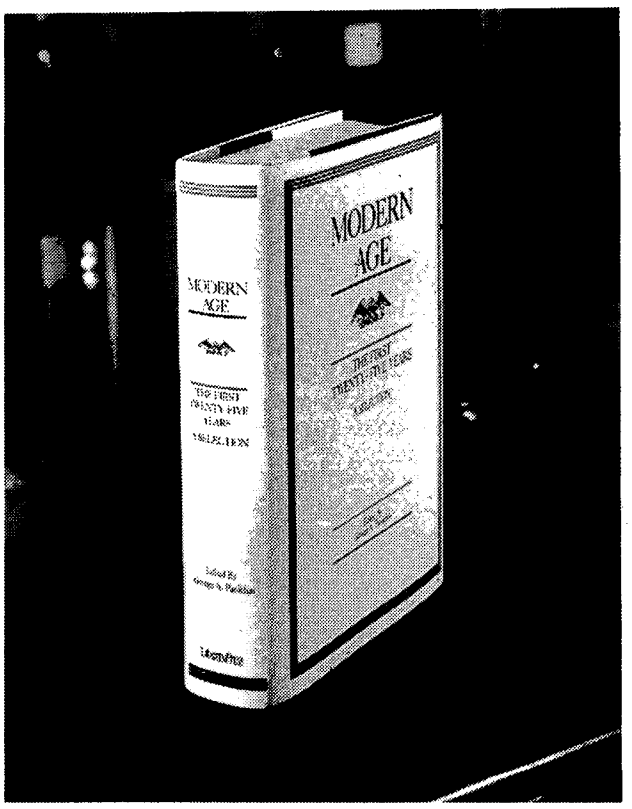

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colleagues wandering about with their heads in the clouds and their feet in dog excrement.

Yet was this call to thought as quixotic as all that? For when summoned to think, people laxly or pedantically carting about their minds can respond neither laxly, because the thought now has to be deliberate, nor pedantically, because no topic has been assigned. Suddenly thinking becomes as arduous as walking when we are watching ourselves walk. So we are obliged to rediscover the pleasures of ratiocination, or—as Susan Sontag might say, though Barzun wouldn't—the erotics of thinking. Reading *The Culture We Deserve* is an encouragement for those willing and able to address the more troubling questions of our time to do so; if here and there they recognize some of their own ideas, no matter: Barzun offers the obverse of Pope's maxim—what oft was expressed, but ne'er so well thought through. □

MEMOIRS OF A COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY: LIFE WITH THE CONTRAS, THE SANDINISTAS, AND THE CIA

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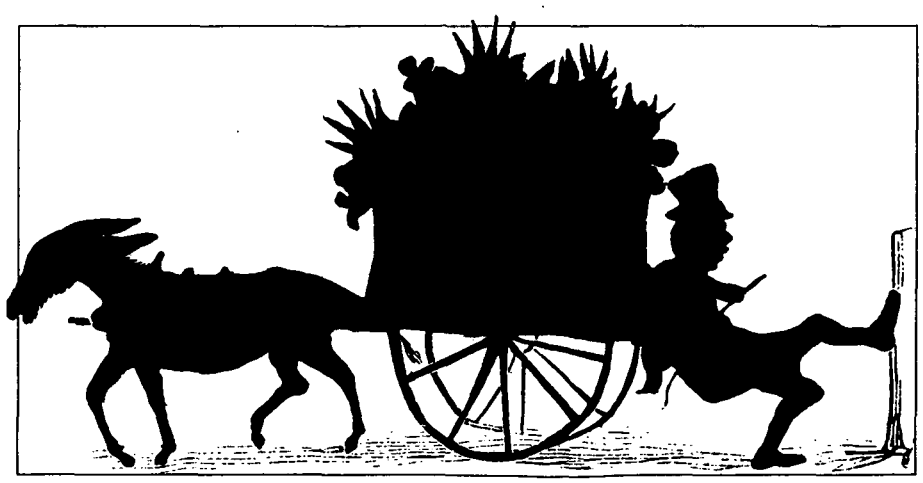
Fred Barnes

Considering their advantages, the contras really should have won in Nicaragua. Their cause was just, which counts for something. There were plenty of them—as many as 15,000 actual soldiers at one point. One way or another, they managed to stay fed, clothed, and reasonably well armed. (Sure, a few Stinger missiles would have helped.) Once their enemy, the Sandinistas, revealed themselves as a Marxist-Leninist variant of the typical Latin American junta, the Nicaraguan people became anti-Sandinista. The Catholic Church, a powerful influence in Nicaragua, opposed the Sandinistas, too. And the contras had a generous ally in Washington, President Reagan and his entire administration. I could go on. Yet the contras lost. How come?

Two reasons come to mind, and Arturo Cruz, Jr. offers a third. The first is obvious: the wavering support and ultimate opposition of the House of Representatives. The House vote in February 1988 against military aid to the contras was the final blow. When he came to office a year later, President Bush figured that trying to undo it was futile. (By then, it was.) So he didn't try. Second, the world press was against the contras, largely for ideological reasons. In Europe, reporters were enthralled with the Sandinistas as the latest thing in revolutionary chic. The fact that the Sandinistas were armed to the teeth by the world's greatest imperialist power, the Soviet Union, detracted from the Sandinistas' image. So European reporters ignored it. In the United States, the press wasn't beguiled by the Sandinistas. Reporters just didn't like Reagan and his policies, particularly those involving the use of force (Lebanon, Grenada, El Salvador, and support for the contras).

The third reason is the contras themselves. To say they lacked unity is putting it mildly. Once Eden Pastora proved to be an egomaniacal flake, they also didn't have a charismatic leader. They badly needed one. As it was, the folks in charge of the contras spent much of their time currying favor with Washington officials, not Nicaraguans. "The contras were mired in their inherent Nicaraguan anarchical political culture," writes Cruz. "At a meeting called by ten contras to discuss the urgency and necessity of independence from the CIA, all ten present would hurry to call the CIA as soon as the meeting was over to inform on one another."

Cruz was in an unusually good position to understand why the shortcomings of the contras were so destructive. His father, Arturo Cruz, was an opponent of Anastasio Somoza who joined the Sandinista government in 1979, serving as ambassador to the United States, among other posts. Like other democrats in Nicaragua, he had a title but no power. That was held by Marxist-Leninists. He quit in disgust, then ran for president of Nicaragua in 1984 as Daniel Ortega's foe and later served on the civilian troika of the United Nicaraguan Opposition, UNO, that nominally ran the contras. Arturo Jr. was a Sandinista turned contra, too. But he's probably more well known for his love affair with Fawn Hall. In any case, he stuck with the contras until 1988. Now he's sympathetic but cynical.



For years, the Sandinistas were plagued with the Nicaraguan disease, political disunity. Fidel Castro and the nature of their revolution helped them overcome it. In early 1979, Castro summoned leaders of the three Sandinista factions to Havana. "Castro's name itself was a drug to Latin revolutionaries and nationalists," says Cruz. "Nicaragua was Castro's special project." In forty-eight hours of nonstop meetings, he cajoled the Sandinistas into setting up a nine-member directorate representing the factions. It worked. Of course, there's always another incentive for temporary unity among Communists. They know seizing the government is everything. Once they win, they'll have absolute power, or at least a shot at it. For democratic revolutionaries, all they're fighting for is the right to run for office. Even if elected, they won't have absolute power, or anything close to it.

Cruz's book is brimming with tales of mindless bickering among the contra leaders. Adolfo Calero couldn't stand Arturo Cruz the elder, and vice versa. Though victory was far from assured, the leaders began positioning themselves for the presidential election that would take place once they triumphed. The formation of UNO, the civilian leadership of the contras, spurred this. "Instead of bringing unity to the contras, [it] created more chaos," writes Cruz. Oliver North and the CIA ordered the leaders to stop scheming, but to no avail. "They might as well have told us to stop breathing," says Cruz. "Conspiracy is the ancient legacy of Nicaraguan political culture."

Cruz argues that the role of Pastora, the heroic Commander Zero who took the entire Nicaraguan parliament hostage in the waning days of Somoza, was critical. "Pastora's decision to join the Sandinistas calmed most Nicaraguans and allowed Daniel Ortega to say, we are a nationalist faction, not a Marxist one," says Cruz. But Pastora, like the elder Cruz, was given no authority once the Sandinistas took over. He soon became "the center of the CIA's Pygmalion-like strategy to mold a man into the Che Guevara of the right." In 1982, Pastora defected. "Pastora's declaration had an enormous impact on me," says Cruz. "Most importantly, I felt liberated from the revolutionary myth. He made me believe that one could be a dissident without being a Somocista or a National Guardsman. . . . I decided I could be critical of the Sandinistas but faithful to Nicaragua."

Pastora was no George Washington. His personality was erratic. The southern front, which Pastora led, made no headway. "Pastora was reluctant to go to war," says Cruz. "But unity with the contras was impossible to achieve while he railed against his own allies." Pastora dissembled. Cruz grew disillusioned. "Pastora is like the gypsy whom, on your first night together, you cannot help but love more than anything on earth," he writes. "The second night you notice she is blind. The third she smiles and she has no teeth. The fourth night you notice she has no legs. But my first night with Pastora lasted a full year. I met few others who did not fall for his seduction."

The absence of a charismatic leader heightened the petty maneuvering among the contra leaders. For Cruz, the epitome was an appearance at a dinner in Miami in 1987 by Elliott Abrams, the assistant secretary of state for Latin America. Calero insisted Abrams sit with him. Others wanted Abrams with them. "The intrigues over the seating lasted two weeks," says Cruz. Meanwhile, "the planes used by the contras to make supply drops were in lamentable shape. The few working helicopters were needed to pick up wounded soldiers from inside Nicaragua. Spare parts for all vehicles were running out. Such was the condition of the contra army during the battle over the seating arrangements for Elliott Abrams."

I don't mean to blame the victim, the contras, for the crime, which is the continuation of Communist rule in Nicaragua. I've met many of them, and they are courageous and dedicated to overthrowing the Sandinistas. They aren't Somocistas; they want democracy. Cruz doesn't blame them for losing the war with the Sandinistas. But he doesn't completely absolve them either. Nor should he. □

Fred Barnes is a senior editor of the New Republic.

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GOD'S DUST: A MODERN ASIAN JOURNEY

Ian Buruma/Farrar Straus Giroux/267 pp. $18.95

William McGurn

In the middle of Hong Kong's central district stands the most expensive building in the world, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. Completed just a few years ago, the modular, glass-and-steel skyscraper is all gray high-tech—with one exception: the ground-floor escalators. In conformance with the directives of a *fung shui* priest, they are slightly askew, to please the spirits. It is but another reminder that behind the British facade of this capitalist enclave lies a Chinese soul.

The Orient is chock full of such compromises, and in *God's Dust: A Modern Asian Journey*, Ian Buruma is obsessed with the region's struggle "to be modern without losing your cultural sense of self." In the course of his work he seeks answers in Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. As he explains in his preface, the reason the question is so compelling in these places is that "they are alive in a way that old Europe, complacently bearing the burden of its long, miraculous continuous history, is not." They are also alive in a way that *God's Dust*, and its author, are not.

The book starts out with promise. Before he gets to the countries themselves he declares against two clichés about Asia popular in the travel literature: First, that its cities are too Westernized; second, that the "spiritual East" stands in contrast to a "materialist West." The pity is that instead of exploding these old clichés he posits his own, that of a "secular European" whose very lack of commitment somehow qualifies him as objective. "If I seem, sometimes, a little harsh in my judgments of other people's illusions," he writes, "I can only say one thing in my defense: To the extent that I have not found a clear answer to my own loyalties, I shall never condemn others for not finding an answer to theirs." No surprise then that the author's most patronizing tone is reserved for those Asians who have attempted to sort out their loyalties and get on with life, as imperfect as their decisions may be. In the Buruma canon the worst sin of all is to reach a conclusion.

It is this vague sense of alienation with his own culture that dooms his book to be no more than an uneven collection of rehashed vignettes (some have been published in the *New York Review of Books* and the *New York Times Magazine*) punctuated by the occasional insight. He opens with Burma, a once-beautiful and prosperous land debilitated by more than three decades of a peculiar, home-grown version of socialism forced on its people by General Ne Win, still thought to be in control despite his ouster last year during the pro-democracy demonstrations. Early on Buruma notes that far from eliminating materialism, Ne Win's "Burmese Way to Socialism" has fostered "a kind of fetish for Western goods." Yet he leaves this observation alone, turning instead to the stale conflict of his chapter heading ("The Village and the City"). Even though he doesn't buy the mythology involved, it never seems to occur to the author that spending so much time on the subject is akin to doing a doctoral dissertation on *The Waltons*.

He takes up this same theme in Thailand, where the clash is between the pure Thai village and the wicked city of Bangkok, which with its large population of ethnic Chinese represents cosmopolitan corruption and greed. Like most in search of a sermon, it doesn't take Parson Buruma long to arrive at Patpong, a garish, two-block area of Bangkok boasting the most explicit sex shows in the world. "The same girl who dances to rock 'n' roll on a bar top, wearing nothing but cowboy boots, seemingly a vision of corrupted innocence, will donate part of her earnings to a Buddhist monk the next morning, to earn religious merit." Then it's time to dust off the old Hooker with a Heart of Gold motif. "The apparent ease with which Thais appear able to adopt different forms, to swim in and out of contradictory worlds, is not proof of a lack of cultural identity, nor is the kitsch of Patpong proof of Thai corruption—on the contrary, it reflects the corrupted tastes of Westerners, for whom it is specifically designed." What a pleasure to learn a few pages later in the chapter that some sensible

William McGurn is Washington bureau chief of National Review.

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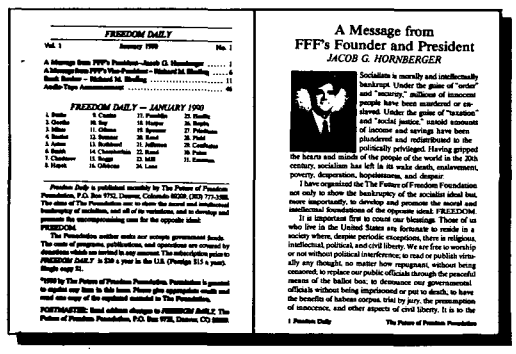
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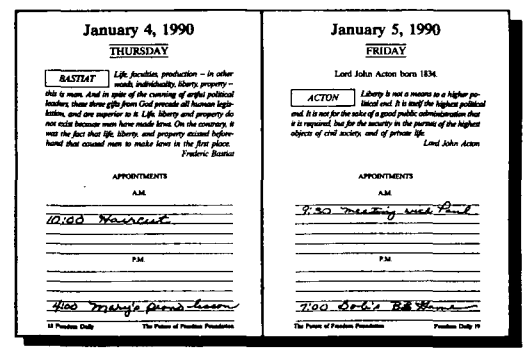
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Thai has lifted Buruma's wallet during an interview.

His section on the Philippines initially holds out more hope, given his premise of an elite made irresponsible by American largesse. "The longing for the white messiah and the childish belief in American omnipotence—communism will never succeed, one is constantly told, 'because the Americans won't allow it'—show how thoroughly colonial Filipinos still are." He invokes the Filipino word *palabos* ("meaning ostentatious show, combining the flamboyance of a fiesta with the solemnity of Hollywood melodrama") to explain much of this behavior. And at one point there is even the glimmer of a long-buried sense of humor when he relays Marcos's reply to Imelda's complaint that the assassinated Ninoy Aquino was "all sauce and no substance." "Sweetheart," said Marcos, "that is the essence of all Filipino politics."

As elsewhere, however, Buruma quickly slides back into the easy cliché rather than dig below the surface of his observations ("three hundred years in a Spanish convent and 40 years in Hollywood have left Filipinos culturally dispossessed"). The problem here is that for a man bent on contrasting East and West he has no hard definition of either. Judging by his promiscuous assortment of places—why Burma and not Vietnam? why Taiwan and not Hong Kong? why Malaysia and not Australia?—he takes the East to be simply a matter of geography. As for the West, his view is no higher than the most backward peasant who sees it only in terms of Sony walkmans, UCLA tee-shirts, and discos. Lacking any philosophical glue, his observations never hang together.

Thus, Buruma takes the cheap way out every time, never coming down on the side of anything save indecision. In writing of Taiwan, for example, he takes on the safe target of foreign missionaries. "[T]o those who believe in reviving, or preserving, minority cultures," the missionary may even be repugnant, "the arrogant white man imposing his values on the economically dispossessed," writes Buruma. But then, sensing he has given an opinion, he quickly covers the other side as well. "But what if the minority culture is so weak, so fragmented, so demoralized that it cannot survive in the modern world, except in cultural reservations, where it becomes a fake culture catering to the tourist trade?" Forget for a moment that he hasn't posed the question fairly. He still never answers it.

Not admitting to a side, of course, is the one unquestioned dogma of his faith. "It is those who presume to impose their answers on others who ought to be condemned," he says at the outset. Oh? What questions? What answers? Americans imposed monogamy on the Mormons. The British outlawed widow-burning in India. We ended slavery. In short, what we have in *God's Dust* is an exercise of self-doubt with all the arch sophistication of an undergraduate editor-in-chief. At one point he puts it this way:

> Can one be truly cosmopolitan? Is there really such a thing as an international culture? . . . Am I a man of international culture? Or simply a man of several cultures, drifting in and out of them, influenced by upbringing, by travel, by reading, and doomed or blessed—depending on my mood—to be culturally self-conscious.

He got that right. □

Richard Brookhiser is a senior editor of National Review *and a columnist for the* New York Observer.

COLLECTED POEMS

Philip Larkin, edited by Anthony Thwaite
Farrar Straus Giroux/Marvell Press/330 pp. $22.50

Richard Brookhiser

The *Collected Poems* of Philip Larkin, editor, jazz critic, and librarian at the University of Hull, have appeared four years after his death in a volume edited by Anthony Thwaite. The first thing that strikes the reader is the photograph of Larkin on the jacket, which is notable for its aggressive ugliness. *Aggressive* implies will, and I use the word advisedly. We are not responsible for our baldness or our wrinkles, which God gives us, but we can choose our glass frames. Larkin's—black, square, heavy—look like a prop from a Monty Python sketch on chartered accountancy, or a spare pair of General Jaruzelski's. He wanted, in other words, to look this way. It suggests the attitude he brought to his art, his career, his life—I'm the way I am, and if you don't like it, who asked you?—the attitude responsible for shaping the slim output preserved in this book.

The chief benefit of Mr. Thwaite's selection is that it will put Larkin in the bookstores. I live in Manhattan, supposedly the publishing and bookselling capital of the country. But I remember the time I had, a few years back, trying to get all of Larkin's individual volumes together. It took months, and I never did find a copy of *The Less Deceived*. Now we can lay hands on him.

Apart from this, the volume is a curious enterprise. "Many poems," the flap copy boasts, "are collected here for the first time." But with a poet as severe and self-censoring as Larkin, that is not necessarily a good thing. In an introduction to a reissue of *The North Ship*, his first volume, Larkin recalled a "hint" one of his literary mentors had given him years earlier: "Yesterday I destroyed about two thousand poems that mean nothing to me now." Larkin obviously didn't destroy the poems that are here exhumed, but that doesn't mean they are any good. If anything, Larkin should have destroyed a number of the poems he did publish.

One use for the clunkers is a game of Spot the Influence. Here is Auden pottiness, there is a whiff of Yeats.

> What lover worries much
> That a ghost bids them touch?
> *A drum taps: a wintry drum*

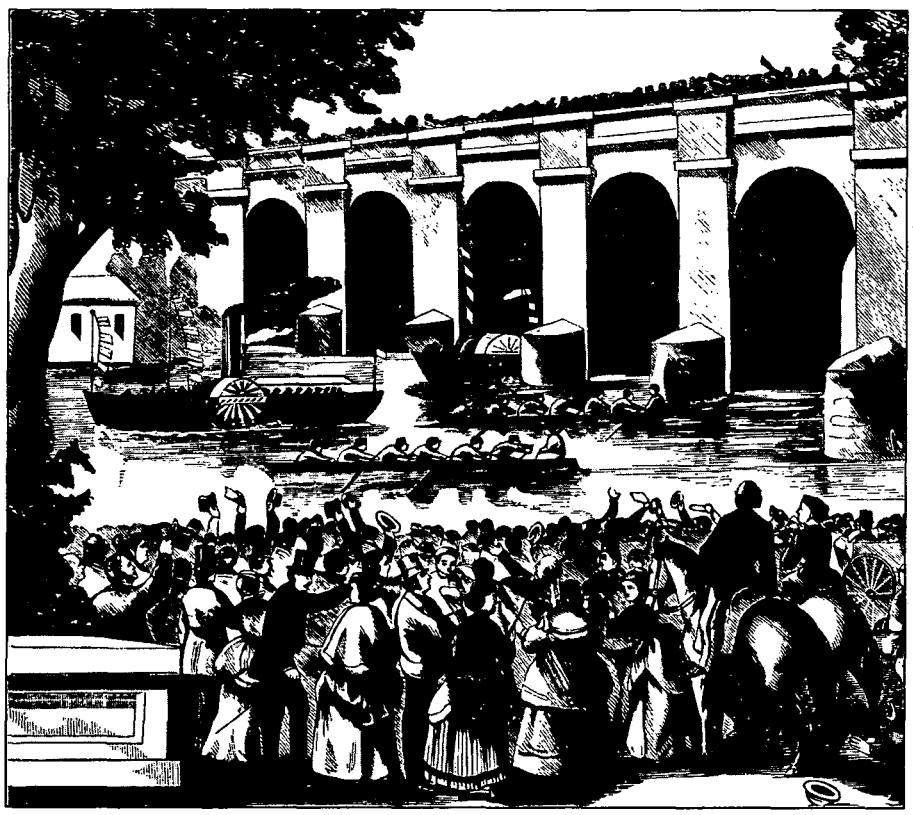
For technicians, they provide a study of development. It's good to see the young man who is satisfied with

> But we are pledged to work alone,
> To serve, bow, nor ask if or why

becoming the older man capable of

> Why should I let the toad *work*
> Squat on my life?

The poems are arranged in chronological order, with an appendix of early poems at the end. Pieces that have been previously published are identified by volume initials. The best thing a curious nonspecialist can do is begin with "At Grass," the twenty-first poem in the book and the first good one, then read on, ignoring all poems labeled TNS (for *The North Ship*) and skipping the appendix entirely.



Larkin began writing as the last bright, clear-aired peak of English poetry, the high modernism of Eliot, Yeats, and Pound started to recede to landmark distance. His problem was what to do next. It's been everyone's problem for fifty years.

One course he might have taken, which is an option open to all poets at all times, would have been to write "poetically"—to model his work on the rhythm and the ring of some great predecessor. This method is probably responsible for more bad poetry than any other. Sometimes, the style of genius is simply unique: Yeats's music, of all the high moderns, was most elusive—so much so that not even he always got it right. Even if a style is classical and replicable, what the imitator gains over his model in skill he is sure to lose in freshness, unless he brings some transforming element of his own to the task.

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Another possibility, one which many of the great revivers of the language have thought themselves to be exploring, is plain speaking. If trying to write like a poet leads you astray, then write like a man. Eliot spoke of purifying the "dialect of the tribe"; John Dryden shucked off Baroque magnificence and encrustation. But the most dogged apostles of plain speaking who also happened to be Titans were probably William Wordsworth in England and Walt Whitman here. Don't make faces at me, they say, I'm only telling you how the leech gatherers/roughs talk.

Of course, no one actually talked like Wordsworth or Whitman. What they were really doing, when they were writing at their best, was partaking of that experience which every great poet shares, and around which critics write and write without ever quite explaining it, when the passion for truth lifts a man up to beauty. You know it when you see it done. If you don't, the future will; it's all the future will have to see, because everything else will have fallen by the wayside.

But plain speaking is not only a means of self-hypnosis for geniuses, it is a good way of getting honest, modest work done, and this, after a few youthful fumbles, is the path Larkin chose to pursue. That doesn't mean his best poems aren't crafted. A little looking uncovers elaborate skeins of rhymes or half-rhymes, sometimes running through quite long stanzas. But Larkin is almost never interested in drawing attention to his labor. Conversational rhythms and enjambments smudge the outlines. When he does give us something unmistakably structured, it's usually in the jog trot of hymns and jingles: forms for which familiarity has bred indifference. These little packages he fills with his bitterest sentiments, so as to profit by the contrast.

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra, just for you.

Metrically, it could be Hallmark, but don't look for it on Mother's Day.

And what, with his consonances and his glasses, did Larkin write about? The answer is surprising, but unavoidable. Larkin was a love poet.

The love comes in two kinds. There is a vein of affection for things and creatures that, perhaps because they can't be held responsible for failing to return it, never flags. "At Grass" is a description of old racehorses.

Do memories plague their ears like flies?
They shake their heads. . . .
Almanacked, their names live; they
Have slipped their names, and stand at ease,
Or gallop for what must be joy.

Larkin may turn these feelings to furniture, to old clothes, to a dead hedgehog. So Robert Herrick wrote about his lares and penates.

Big-L love means love of other people, and this is trickier. In fact, it is impossible. We have already seen what a mess parents make of it. Larkin's men and women don't do any better.

Parting, after about five
Rehearsals, was an agreement
That I was too selfish, withdrawn,
And easily bored to love.
Well, useful to get that learnt.

The closest a couple in Larkin's poems come to love is not a real couple at all, but a pair of centuries-old stone effigies.

Such plainness of the pre-baroque
Hardly involves the eye, until
It meets his left-hand gauntlet, still
Clasped empty in the other; and
One sees, with a sharp tender shock,
His hand withdrawn, holding her hand.

The poem "An Arundel Tomb" ends with the line, "What will survive of us is love." But, in offering the thought, Larkin first tells us that it is only "almost true"; that is, false. The gesture

Orthodox Catholics: DON'T DESPAIR!

Anne Roche Muggeridge, daughter-in-law of convert Malcolm Muggeridge, has said in her recent book, *The Desolate City: Revolution in the Catholic Church* (Harper & Row): "Because the integrity of its message has been betrayed, the Catholic Church is in ruins. Yet even now there are converts, of exceptionally high quality, and their number is increasing with the tenure of the present Pope. Catholics watched with a mixture of pity and amusement as the excellent Anglo-Catholic *New Oxford Review* argued and agonized itself into the [Roman] Catholic Church. I know a substantial number of recent converts like this and am much edified by their purity and ardour. Seven of them are my godchildren, and I must confess that some of us, to our shame, earnestly tried to delay them, on the grounds of the growing disorder in the Catholic Church. They forced their way past us anyway, thank God. They come because at the highest level of Catholic teaching, the doctrine of the faith, though much embattled, remains uncompromised and is as fearlessly proclaimed by John Paul II as by Peter, Paul, Ignatius, or Augustine. These new Catholics and the extraordinary Pope to whom they belong are a very present comfort when one is tempted to despair."

Over the last quarter century, the number of converts to Roman Catholicism slowed to a trickle. But now, a new wave of converts is entering the Church. What's more, contrary to the shibboleth that Catholicism is a superstitious religion for the ignorant, an unusually high proportion of the new Catholics consists of writers and intellectuals. Among them, it may be hoped, is another Chesterton, another Maritain, another Newman, another Ronald Knox, another Dorothy Day, another Gerard Manley Hopkins, another Edith Stein – converts all.

The new converts are not attracted to the diluted Catholicism of the Hans Kungs, the Charles Currans, or those who sign ads favoring legal abortion. No, they are attracted by the Catholicism of the ages, the Magisterium, and the inspiring leadership of the current Pope.

The forum for the new generation of converts is the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a monthly magazine that takes its name from the 19th-century Oxford Movement in England. Today there is a new Oxford Movement afoot in America. Among the converts to Roman Catholicism who write for the REVIEW are Paul C. Vitz, George William Rutler, Sheldon Vanauken, John C. Cort, Walker Percy, Thomas Howard, L. Brent Bozell, James J. Thompson Jr., and Peter Kreeft. But the REVIEW isn't just for converts. Most of our writers are cradle Catholics and a significant minority belongs to various other churches. Amazingly, while the REVIEW is a lightning rod for "papist" pilgrims, it is also ecumenical in spirit. And we cover the full range of issues of concern to today's reflective and believing Christian.

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we set so much store by was only an artistic detail:

A sculptor's sweet commissioned grace
Thrown off in helping to prolong
The Latin names around the base.

Loveless lives can make us as depressed as a bachelor considering a rented room.

. . . how we live measures our nature,
And at his age having no more to show
Than one hired box should make him pretty sure
He warranted no better.

Sometimes, as in "Love Songs in Age" or "Faith Healing," the contemplation of lovelessness breaks out in real rage. But there is nothing to be done about it.

Life is first boredom, then fear.
Whether or not we use it, it goes
And leaves what something hidden from us chose.

If you don't like it, who asked you?

Here and there, rarely, we get a glimpse of a third mood, a rapture higher than affection and, unlike love, fulfilled. Where jazz was concerned, Larkin was what is called a moldy fig: a fan of jazz before be-bop got to it, and he writes in one poem of Sidney Bechet that "On me your voice falls . . . /Like an enormous yes" (you won't find a better phrase-long definition). Or nature, in its impersonal totality, gives a similar lift: ". . . that high-builded cloud/Moving at summer's pace." But summer ends, or the record does, and we're back in the hired box: forerunner of the box we never vacate.

It is only fair to a poet who moves us to consider him on his own terms. But it's only fair to us to consider him on ours as well. Get a few steps back from Larkin's seductive plain speaking, and his world looks severely limited: whether by the fate of his character, as he would say, or by choice, as of glass frames, as I would, doesn't matter. He does us the favor, however, of not trying to be us. He lived in a kind of perpetual four o'clock in the morning, and that's what he presents. When we hit that hour, as we regularly do, he is there, to show us around. □

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NOW, WHERE WERE WE?

Roy Blount, Jr./Villard Books/252 pp. $17.95

Joe Mysak

Roy Blount, Jr.'s new book brings to mind the story of the baseball writer who in the 1950s came back to the press box shaking his head after talking to Casey Stengel, the Yankee manager then at the top of his form.

"Did Casey tell you who's going to pitch tomorrow?" one of his fellows asked.

"He started to," said the writer, "but he got talking about McGraw and the time he managed in Toledo and the Pacific Coast League and God knows what else. I think tomorrow's starting pitcher is Christy Mathewson."

Blount, who first made his name in sportswriting two decades ago, learned at Casey's knee. But let's stay at the ballpark a moment—later in time, and with the man himself. The Boston writer George V. Higgins sat next to Blount in the press box at a 1975 Cincinnati Reds–Boston Red Sox World Series matchup. Higgins writes in his latest, *Progress of the Seasons*:

I do not know quite how to characterize Blount's occupation. The usual sobriquet is "humorist," but it's too tame for him; he's more of a cynic gone antic, with occasional intervals of utter battiness, and it's very difficult to devote full attention to anything else while sitting next to him. . . . He does not like to hurtle to the end of things, especially when he finds himself surrounded by an appreciative audience. The fact that he knows at most three or four of his perhaps fifty or sixty listeners hinders him not at all; indeed, it seems to impel him to shift from narrative to aria, his almost caloric Southern accent coagulating like a big warm muddy river choked with catfish in the sun, eddying and swirling, seeming never to progress but always and inexorably moving on. It must have taken him close to the end of the regulation nine innings to complete his monologue.

Monologue. Aria. Roy Blount is the storyteller: the fellow on the next stool over, the pal your wife usually dislikes. He almost always puts together a fine, small gumbo, no matter what the subject, and sometimes, in spite of the subject. On the face of it, in *Now, Where Were We?*, Blount collects pieces he's written on subjects ranging from dirt-eating to postcards to walking in New York City, touring London, dogs versus cats, the Confederacy, and air travel. Along the way, he introduces his reader to recalcitrant coon dogs and assorted relatives, and muses about politics, fried food, the nature of debt, plumbing, segregation, and songwriting.

It is to Blount's credit that all this works harmoniously, although his basic stock here is admittedly thin (and has been getting thinner for some time): most often a single gag garnished and extended for little more than one or two pages, with all sorts of mental garbage and stuff from the attic. And madcap: James Thurber would often produce a father or grandfather to make a point; Blount is as likely to bring in Thoreau or Emily Dickinson for a cameo appearance.

Firing such a stylistic blunderbuss necessarily means he hits some targets. In a discussion of whiskey, for example, he reflects, "Doesn't it taste good, though, and haven't I had some good times when it was served. . . . I'd have far fewer stories to tell today if I'd avoided it. Of course I'd remember even more of them if I'd had less of it," which for my money is right up there with the old saw that the sober man's thoughts turn into the drunk man's words. Blount also recalls sipping a glass of Black Bush, and observes, "the notion that some Irish whiskey is Catholic and some Protestant is an American canard." (Confirmed for me by a professional. Brendan McMullan, who presides over the second floor of Brennan's on Stone Street in lower Manhattan, once arbitrated a discussion of the virtues of Jameson's and Bushmill's with "Don't let your politics get in the way of your drinking," a frank dismissal of the politico-religious argument.)

Blount is a hearty fellow, judging from his pictures, and in apparent constant warfare with his body. In a piece on the "healthfolk's" advice to listen to your body, Blount listens to his body, a veritable Tower of Babel, as the tastebuds plead for spaghetti "with a whole lot of homemade sauce with hamburger and mushrooms and peppers and onions and Parmesan cheese!" while the mind mulls it, the stomach questions it, the "going-to-the-trouble-of-cooking-muscles" say "Nahhh . . ." and his conscience yells, "Raw carrots! Raw carrots!" In one voice, they all decide upon "a nice glass of bourbon with some ice in it," backing it up as a sensual experience: "A glass of bourbon would look good, taste good, and smell good, and the ice would make a nice little clinking sound. And it would make me feel good." He refuses their blandishments, and makes the spaghetti.

If he is at war with his body, he is also in open conflict with the times, and this means everything from filofax mania to taking a line of credit against the equity of his home. He is, he admits, not very eighties. But he also indulges the old whines about Greed in Reagan's America and his "eight years of geriatric space-cadet presidency," all of which plays pretty well with certain kinds of editors, but which is wearing thin with most other people.

Political throwaway lines aside, Roy Blount, Jr. is a funny writer, the kind who draws readers beyond a magazine's table of contents. But like other humorists who have made their living in print, from George Ade to Robert Benchley to Jean Shepherd in our own day, he seems, if declining length is any clue, to have less interest in writing these days and more in pure entertainment as a professional funny fellow. He was a regular guest on the "Prairie Home Companion" radio show, and some months back gave a one-man show Off-Broadway. His next book might well be a collection of scripts. □

Joe Mysak, The American Spectator*'s chief saloon correspondent, is the managing editor of the daily* Bond Buyer.

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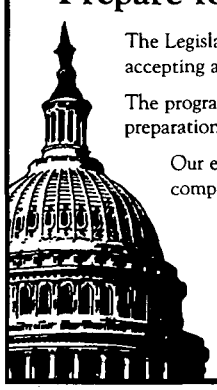

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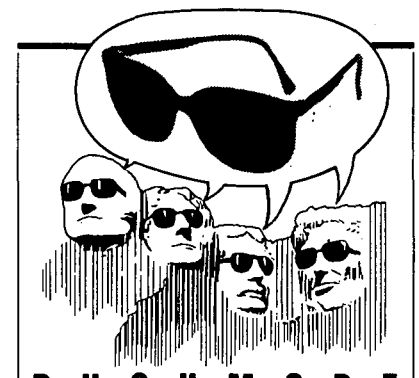

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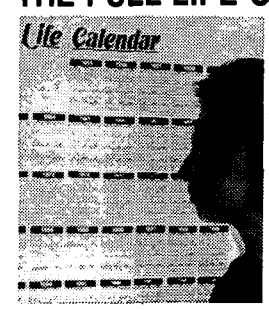

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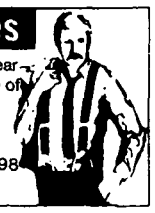

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CORRESPONDENCE
(continued from page 9)

and consumed resources proportionately, the planet would soon be destroyed.

Population planners let themselves fall into the trap of saying that population growth per se is the cause of social problems. Why? Because the need to manage population growth is a relatively new feature in human culture, and it's clear from Bethell's article that we have yet to develop a comprehensive new ideology that can accommodate that framework.

—Dan Stein
Executive Director
FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform)
Washington, D.C.

Tom Bethell replies:
Mr. Stein fails to address the point that I made in my article, that Mexico is easily capable of accommodating its own population. First, however, the Mexican government must abandon its possessive attitude toward the property of its citizens, and permit these citizens to make voluntary exchanges with one another. If these changes are made, Mexicans will be able to find remunerative work in their own country.

Organizations such as FAIR, which disapprove of more people coming to the United States, might logically pay more attention than they do to *bad government abroad*—the root cause of continued immigration to the U.S.

Phi Beta Zappa
Boo, hiss to Joe Queenan's review of the recently appeared biography of Frank Zappa (*TAS*, August 1989). As a longtime pop/rock music listener, and an admitted Zappaphile, I recognize all too clearly Queenan's critique (more of Zappa's persona than of the book) as typical of those holier-than-thou trussed up squares who are so self-conscious that they think Zappa is attacking everything that is good and decent, a.k.a., them.

Joe, you miss the point entirely—Mr. Zappa has been effectively spoofing for the past twenty years such deserving things as obviously packaged pop music "product," drug taking, the deficiency of the American school system, the welfare state, our gullible youth, and most of all people who seemingly deliberately choose not to think deeply about or question anything, but who fill in all the squares, mouth all the slogans, do all the "right" things, etc., etc., ad nauseam, as if to increase their chances of getting on in the bureaucracy of their choice, only to find out later that they have been bought.

True, some of Zappa's antics have been embarrassing, even dismaying at times, but I'll bet that even Joe Queenan has done a few things he'd rather not have done. Whaddya say Joe? Feel like being Vice President?

I don't know how he got there, but far from ending up at a big-government rag like *Forbes*, Zappa is sounding very conservative/libertarian these days, talking about "smaller government and smaller taxes," parents raising their own kids (not giving government the role of overseeing rock lyrics, for example), and people being allowed to make their own decisions and then being responsible for them.

I for one can overlook Mr. Zappa's alleged past excesses in order to let some of the preceding ideas get through. *—Douglas O. Wickey*
Richardson, Texas

Joe Queenan replies:
Mr. Wickey is correct. I have done a few things I'd rather not have done. I bought three Frank Zappa albums.

Rocky Road
I do *not* want Reagan on the rock (*TAS*, July 1989)—unless it's Alcatraz.
—Mrs. William J. Ragan
Shawnee Mission, Kansas

I support *TAS*'s suggestion that Ronald Reagan join our other distinguished Presidents on the Mt. Rushmore memorial.

Meanwhile, as you try to convince liberal Democrats to approve, I have another suggestion to make. I propose that his predecessor, Jimmy Carter, also be put up on that distant, rather isolated mountain . . . alive, well, and permanently. If necessary, chain him there.
—Gil Crandall
Annapolis, Maryland

Junk Mail
I found your advertisement to be very repulsive. The first complaint I have is that you sent this through the school. In the future, if you care to send me junk mail, do so to my home address. It will be easier to dispose of it with the rest of my junk mail. My second complaint is that you chose National Merit Finalists to receive your letter. We Finalists are far too intelligent to subscribe to your right-wing Republican magazine. We do not oppose your right to be Republicans, but we are offended that you assumed we were also. I hope you will be more careful in your future mailings of advertisements. *—Geoffrey Coram*
Reston, Virginia

The American Spectator welcomes comments from its readers. Typed, double-spaced letters of fewer than 200 words are preferred. Please include return address and daytime phone number for purposes of verification by our standing army of fact checkers.

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CURRENT WISDOM

Washington Post

No, she is not pulling our legs—Mary McGrory really believes this; and, perhaps, after her virtuosi have reformed Managua she will dispatch them to Peking, where tough customers are also needed:

If the administration is serious about introducing democracy to Nicaragua, it should dispatch the League of Women Voters to Managua, not the CIA, which is the least democratic of our institutions. They understand how the system works. They are old hands at arranging debates. They take no nonsense from anyone. No dirty tricks, no character assassination, would be allowed. They are meticulously neutral.

[June 13, 1989]

Spy

More knee-slapping yuppie humor of the kind that cracks up Uncle Will and Aunt Agatha over tea:

Thank goodness George Bush has reverted to his old WASPy, silly, pre-1988 self, admitting he couldn't get through to a fellow world leader ("The line was busy," Bush said) and writing dumbbell reminiscences of undergraduate life ("One of my very favorite courses was History of Art 36 [pots and pans] . . . a great course in American furniture and silver") for Yale's newspaper. It turns out the mean, know-nothing racist Bush of last year's presidential campaign was just a phase he had to go through; the wimp is back. "Maybe someday," a disappointed friend of his said, "George'll just haul off and slug somebody." *Why, Dan, what the heck do you mean I'm a liberal?* comes the cry from the West Wing. *I'll show you who's a liberal.*

[August 1989]

New York Newsday

From the correspondence page of a cosmopolitan New York daily, evidence that Miss Carolyn Jones of Manhattan watches too much primetime television:

It's about time straight women woke up and stopped dreaming about their wedding day, because marriage is not usually a wonderful thing for women. It's a place where a lot of women get beaten up, raped and killed by their husbands, and where children are raped by their fathers and other male relatives.

[August 2, 1989]

Mother Jones

Orgasmic revelations from Saul Landau, available only in *M.J.*:

As Fidel talked, I allowed myself to listen closely and feel that peculiar sensation that I experience in his presence, as if I am meeting with a force of nature, a man so filled with the energy of historical mission that he is almost of a different species. Power radiates from him, emitting acute awareness of his needs—and a realization, as well, of how closely these needs have related to the destiny of his nation.

[July/August 1989]

Village Voice

A frightening report on the schemes of the Radical Right:

Unfunniest Read of the Week: P. J. O'Rourke's "A Call for a New McCarthyism" in the current *American Spectator*, which features an endless enemies list including Sting, Salman Rushdie, and "anybody whose last name is Cockburn." The only consolation: The *Voice* makes the list (he hates us, he really hates us!).

[July 25, 1989]

Christian Science Monitor

Fey findings on matters metaphysical in nature and apparently subliterate in exposition by Miss Peridita Huston, director of public affairs of the International Planned Parenthood Federation of London, largest dispenser of condoms in the known universe:

"If you're nature-literate," she says, "you respect the nurturing, the earth, the fertility." And that, she feels, leads naturally to a greater respect for womanhood. "I think that's all part of the whole dependency and interdependency of beings and species and genders," she adds.

"If we educate that out of us, we're stripped of what is probably the most important and most survival-oriented quality. It's probably denying one of the most positive, energizing parts of us."

That quality, she feels, engenders respect both for human equality and for a natural environment that is sustainable rather than imbalanced.

"If you don't care for that which sustains you, how can you care for that which is equal to you?" she asks. "If you respect nature, if you are nature-literate, sustainability flows. All the imbalances happen when you lose that very first respect and caring."

[July 12, 1989]

Australian

The effect of the Ugly American (circa 1980s) on a polite little antipodean island:

WELLINGTON: New Zealand historians are aghast at claims by a visiting woman professor from Hawaii that their hero, Captain James Cook, was a "syphilitic, tubercular racist."

In daily television appearances, Dr. Haunani-Kayl Trask has left audiences quivering with claims that the British explorer who discovered their country and Australia more than 200 years ago sparked diseases that halved the population of Hawaii and spread syphilis among New Zealand's Maoris.

Trask has compounded the outrage by saying that she was proud that Hawaiians beat and stabbed Cook to death.

"We not only killed him, we carved him into little pieces, and though we did not eat him, for Hawaiians are not cannibals, we did return part of him to the British—which horrified them, because we returned his hind-quarters," she said.

[July 4, 1989]

Ms.

Proof that 200 years after the fall of the Bastille the spirit of Revolution survives:

While antiabortion zealots are stuck on the 917th verse of "Amazing Grace," pro-choicers at rallies around the nation are coming up with unique ditties of their own to stir the faithful. Zipper's favorites: *Best Cheer*: "Two, four, six, eight, we're the ones who ovulate!" (or, "We're not here to incubate!"). *Best Song* (to the tune of "It's My Party"): "It's my body and I'll breed if I want to/and if I don't want to/don't tell me I have to/you'd want the Choice if it happened to you." *Most Well-Intentioned, Least Intelligible Chant*: "Out of my uterus, keep the state!" And *Best Slogan*: "Free Barbara Bush!"

[September 1989]

Vegetarian Times

Pathos:

A while back we asked readers to finish the sentence "You know you're a vegetarian when. . . ." The responses—some funny, some sentimental—provided a warm and playful look at a cross-section of vegetariana. Here are a few we'd like to share with you.

You know you're a vegetarian when . . .

. . . the food on your dinner plate no longer interests your cat.

—Lillian DiPiazza, Old Bridge, N.J.

. . . you bring your own potato to a dinner party, "just in case."

—Tricia Hoffman, Santa Monica, Calif.

. . . you catch household insects and put them outside, rather than kill them.

—Barbara Grandolfo, Naples, Maine.

[September 1989]

Santa Cruz Sentinel

A major intellectual event in progressive Santa Cruz occasions the emergence of the English-speaking world's next Somerset Maugham, Mr. Scottland Jacobson, organizer:

A variety of workshops, seminars and special events are planned as part of Gay Lesbian Bisexual Awareness Week at UCSC, which will begin Saturday night at Merrill Dining Hall with the Talent Show and Lip Sync contest at 8:30 p.m.

The events range from the downright silly to the serious.

A re-creation of the Dating Game and Newlywed Game in which contestants read from scripts and end up with dream dates will be "a joke, a total spoof," according to Scottland Jacobson, one of the week's organizers. . . . The S & M Workshop is "not really about whips and chains and junk like that," says Jacobson.

"It's about trust," he explains.

And while the Cruising and Flirting Workshop isn't really intended to be instructional, participants will be "discussing different ways that people have picked up people in the past," Jacobson says. "We'll just learn a bunch of weird stuff."

[April 28, 1989]

San Diego Union

More evidence that the poetry of Allen Ginsberg is a direct consequence of a lifelong affliction; reading gives him motion-sickness:

Poet Allen Ginsberg was among those contacted for a story on the 20th anniversary of the first moon landing. Asked if the money, time and effort spent on the Apollo project were worth the result, Ginsberg composed a free-verse reply over the phone. (The quote . . . is from W.E.B. DuBois.)

When he finished, Ginsberg was asked where he wanted the lines of the poem to break. "Just run it together in one big paragraph," he said.

We Haven't Landed on Earth Yet

Fifty-thousand homeless in New York. A quarter-million died in Sudan of starvation in 1988. U.S.-trained death squads in Salvador. Government murder in Lhasa and Beijing. Planet Earth itself suffering AIDS, its immune system unable to repair the damage done by the human virus. Will we set up slave camps on Saturn? "Civilized persons are willing to live in comfort, even if the price of this is poverty, ignorance, and disease of the majority of their fellowmen; and to maintain this privilege, men have waged war until today war tends to become universal and continuous, and the excuse for this war continues largely to be color and race." Hypertechnology is not progress but abstraction, monolith, Moloch, species chauvinism, destruction of nature, reduction of life forms. Everyone who can afford it should sit down and meditate on our ultimate nature. We haven't landed on Earth yet.

[July 16, 1989]

Washington Post

Another product of American higher education makes bold to speak out on the correspondence pedestal of a great American daily:

Poets in Different Hats

In response to Amy Schwartz's thoughtful "Why Are Our Poets Invisible?" [op-ed, June 4]:

They haven't disappeared, but they have changed their clothes. Today's poets wear many different hats and are variously named: Spielberg . . . Simon . . . Lennon . . . Manilow . . . *—Stephen R. Fahey*
Kensington

[June 20, 1989]

Soviet Life

The good news of Soviet industry "on the move" from an advertisement from the Rotary club-minded editors of astonishing *Soviet Life*:

Learn of the Extraordinary Achievements of Modern Soviet Industry!

From the new towns of the once-empty Siberian wilderness to astonishing hydro-electric projects on the Dnieper, the Volga and the Don . . . from the bustling steel mills of the Ukraine, to the mighty shipyards of Leningrad and Nikolayev . . . Soviet industry is on the move!

[1989]

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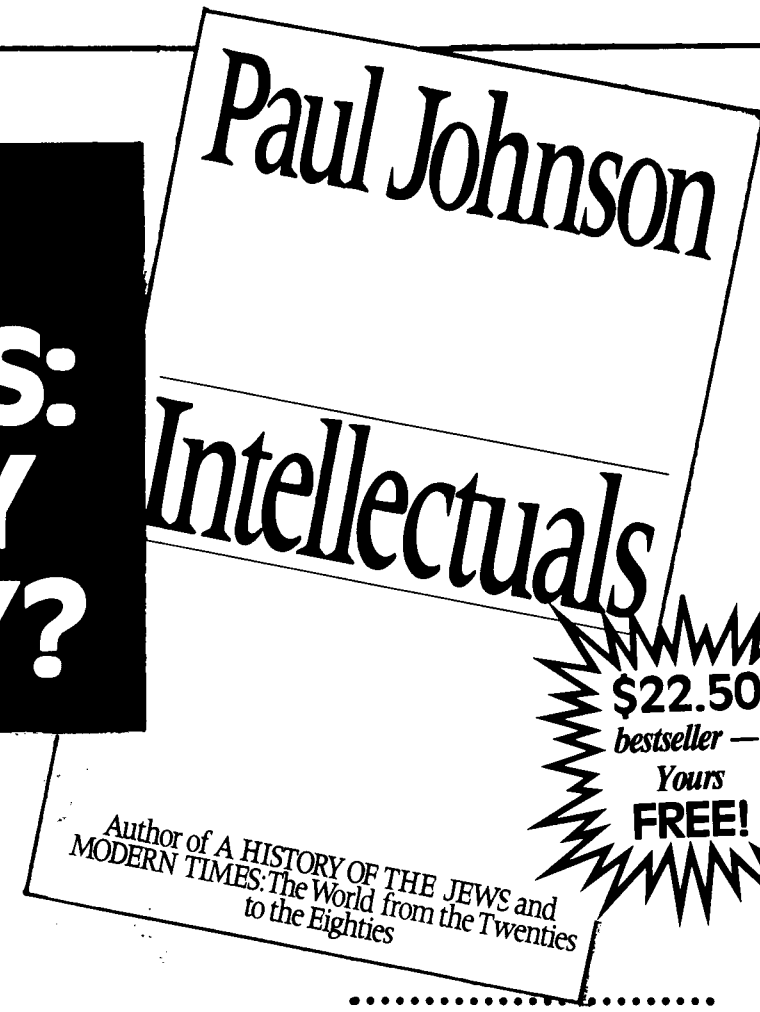

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